

William Peter Blatty

HANDCARVED COFFINS

Screenplay By

William Peter Blatty

Based Upon
the novella by
Truman Capote

FIRST DRAFT
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FADE IN:

INT. CATHOLIC CONFESSIONAL

The PRIEST'S hand shades his brow as he listens to a whispered recitation of sins from o.s. He is elderly, silver-haired; looks kindly. The CAMERA is in motion, very gradually moving in closer to the priest as:

PENITENT

I've had impure thoughts, Father.

PRIEST

Yes.

PENITENT

I can't stop them. They're there all the time, every minute.

PRIEST

Christ forgives our sins. Just remember that.

PENITENT

Yes.

PRIEST

What else?

PENITENT

I cheated a customer once.

Very softly, the SOUND of a TELEPHONE RINGING at the other end of a line insinuates itself, along with an orchestral rendition of Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine." The RINGING and the MUSIC will grow gradually louder as:

PENITENT

And I yelled at my wife a few times. I cursed her.

PRIEST

Yes.

PENITENT

Then I kidnapped this six-month-old baby --

Here the voice of the penitent is suddenly transformed, becoming heavily Hispanic, coarse and hostile as it continues:

PENITENT

-- and you ain't going to find him, fuckin' mother. We going to kill him and you ain't going to find him, not with all you fuckin' logic and you Jesuit training.

The TELEPHONE and MUSIC SOUNDS are coming up, the priest is slowly looking up toward CAMERA, stunned and mesmerized as louder and louder -- with REVERB -- grows the voice of the penitent:

PENITENT

Fucking mother!
Fucking mother!
Fucking mother!
Fucking --!

At the last it is a hysterical shriek and suddenly: SILENCE. Except for the low ringing of the phone at the other end of a line and registering through a speakerphone.

A man -- JAKE PEPPER -- has awakened from a dream. His face -- though many years younger -- is that of the priest and it fills the FRAME as we cut to him jerking his head up suddenly from his crooked arms and the desk on which he was dozing. He is haggard, a driven man in need of sleep. Through a window in the background, we see the Manhattan skyline bathed in a pre-dawn light. Gradually recovering, Jake stares at the speakerphone, the low ringing. He disconnects, pushes a button on the complex telephone. We HEAR the speed-dialing of another number. A sleepy WOMAN'S VOICE answers the ringing. A Hispanic accent. Jake's index finger runs down a list of names and telephone numbers. The list is pages thick. On the top sheet, most of the names have been crossed off in order with a pencil line through them. Jake's finger stops at the first clear name.

SLEEPY WOMAN'S VOICE

Allo.

JAKE

Good morning. Is this Mrs. Allondo??

SLEEPY WOMAN'S VOICE

Wha's wrong? Wha' hoppen?

JAKE

I'm calling for "The New York Times."
We just wondered if you'd like
to subscribe to the paper.

SLEEPY WOMAN'S VOICE
Wha' you say?

JAKE
Would you -- ?

SLEEPY WOMAN'S VOICE
Jesus Chris', man, ees fi'e o'clock!

JAKE
May I speak to your --?

Jake is cut off by a stream of Spanish curses, then a hang-up. He exhales, picks up a sheet of lined paper. On it, written in crude letters, the message:

we have the baby. Don't be
stupid gringo assholes or we
kill him, fucking mother. wait
for call.

Jake sets it down, punches speed call button on the phone, and crosses off a name on the list. The CAMERA begins a slow ascent, disclosing an enormous and -- except for Jake -- unpopulated room.

INT. FBI MANHATTAN OPERATIONS ROOM - DAWN

Jake waits, his head propped in a hand, while the phone rings at the other end. Someone answers, a HISPANIC MALE just roused from deep sleep.

HISPANIC MALE'S VOICE
Si.

JAKE
Good morning. Is this Mister Herrera?

HISPANIC MALE'S VOICE
Wha' you wan'?

JAKE
Sir, I'm calling for "The New York Times." Would you care to subscribe to the paper this morning?
We're --

HISPANIC MALE'S VOICE
(shouting)
Fucking mother gringo asshole!

The CAMERA stops its movement. From the phone, an off voice, a woman's, asking in Spanish, "Who is it?" The Male Hispanic answers her in Spanish, "Some wise guy."

And the SOUND of a hang-up. For a moment, Jake stares at the phone. Then he picks up a second instrument, dials a number, waits. Then an indistinct MALE VOICE answering.

JAKE

Pepper. Sorry to awaken you, sir.
I've found them.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. NEW YORK GHETTO APARTMENT - DAY

From the off kitchen, the SOUND of flesh sizzling in a pan. A female giggling. The apartment is filthy, in disarray, cluttered with empty food cartons and garish religious icons, pictures and votive lights. Syringes and drug paraphernalia. A HISPANIC MALE, high on PCP and clad only in a disposable diaper and a double gun belt filled with two .45's, dances to the rhythm of his own humming. And now from the kitchen, a HISPANIC FEMALE enters. She too wears a double gun belt, but is otherwise nude except for her crucifix earrings. Giggling, she joins her companion in the dance, waving time with the cooking implement in her hand.

AT DOOR TO APARTMENT

It is broken in.

AT THE KIDNAPPERS

The Male is reaching for his guns as we HEAR:

FIRST AGENT (O.S.)

Freeze! FBI!

The male kidnapper draws and fires. His companion giggles.

AT FBI AGENTS

Firing into apartment from hallway.

AT KIDNAPPERS

The male is taking bloody hit after hit, but seems impervious. His companion covers her mouth, giggling at the blood spurting from him, then calmly draws her guns and fires at the agents while humming and dancing a cha-cha. Two shots hit her chest, and she begins an unremitting scream as she stares down at the blood.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Agents firing in. A few feet down the hall stands Jake Pepper, gun drawn, waiting.

INT. GHETTO APARTMENT - DAY

The male kidnapper's chest is ripped by bullets, and as he slowly and jerkily sinks to the floor, his companion, still screaming, races across the room, leaps through a closed window, shattering the glass. From afar, the WAILING SOUND of an approaching AMBULANCE.

EXT. GHETTO APARTMENT COURTYARD - DAY

Still shrieking mindlessly, the girl kidnapper falls through space and lands in the communal garbage heap mounded below.

INT. GHETTO APARTMENT - DAY

Now there is silence, except for the ambulance SOUND and the sizzling from the kitchen, o.s., as three F.B.I. agents holster their weapons and come to standing positions. The male kidnapper lies dying, moaning, murmuring jerky fragments of a Spanish prayer. Jake is entering. TWO AGENTS head toward the kitchen. The THIRD AGENT goes to window to look down to bottom of courtyard while Jake walks to a phone.

HISPANIC MALE

I want a priest.

Jake freezes, stares at the kidnapper. The third agent turns from the window to assess Jake, then the kidnapper.

HISPANIC MALE

Please. I want to make my confession.
Get a priest. I want a priest.

Jake, mesmerized by something, has slowly moved to the kidnapper and goes to one knee beside him. From the kitchen:

FIRST AGENT (O.S.)

Oh, no.

THIRD AGENT

Jake, don't!

HISPANIC MALE

A priest.

SECOND AGENT (O.S.)
(horror)

Oh, my God!

As the Third Agent moves toward kitchen:

FIRST AGENT (O.S.)
Oh, no no no no --!

SECOND AGENT (O.S.)
(anguish and shock)
Jesus Christ!

THIRD AGENT (O.S.)
(an agonized, angry
shout)
Oh, Godddddd!

HISPANIC MALE
A priest. I want a priest.

From off, the Third Agent's cry breaks down into sobbing, and on Jake's face, a silent torment, an emotion like awful indecision, inner struggle, as he stares at the kidnapper. From off, the ambulance wail, the girl screaming as the pain of her reality registers on her unconscious through the veil of PCP, and we:

CUT AWAY TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY - DAY

Across the spires drift the SOUNDS of BASKETBALL PRACTICE. Late fall. Gust-blown fallen leaves.

INT. UNIVERSITY FIELDHOUSE - DAY

AT BASKETBALL COURT

Georgetown basketball coach JOHN THOMPSON barks instructions at his scrimmaging players and fusses at them severely.

AT BLEACHER SEATS

where we discover Jake and FATHER MCGRATH, an elderly Jesuit whose face is scarred by pain and reflects the vestiges of a serious assault on his faith. He is using a Zippo to light Jake's cigarette, looks with concern at Jake's trembling hands. Jake registers as a man both shaken and enraged.

MCGRATH

You can't do it all by yourself,
you know, Jake. You can't be God.

JAKE

Who would want to.

A distant sadness in McGrath's expression as he scrutinizes Jake's face. Jake takes a deep drag, exhales the smoke, glancing to the court as:

CU JOHN THOMPSON

His deep voice rumbles with danger as:

THOMPSON

Reggie Williams, you can try that
shit in the N.B.A. but you're
playin 'on my court now!

AT JAKE MCGRATH

as the off-sounds of the scolding continue. Jake is staring at the ground as:

JAKE

I read once that Mengele decided
it was hard to kill kids with the
cyanide, Tom, it wasted time, it
took them too long to die, so they
dug a huge pit outdoors and built
a fire in it, Tom, an inferno,
and then dump trucks crammed with

two and three and four-year-old kids would back up to the pit and dump them out, and when some of the kids, all screaming and burning, climbed out, there were guards around who pushed them back down with long sticks.

AT BASKETBALL ACTION

Thompson yelling.

AT THOMPSON

THOMPSON

Keep your hands up, I told you!
Hands!

AT JAKE MCGRATH

JAKE

At least I didn't have to see it.

MCGRATH

What happened?

JAKE

Did you ever burn your finger
on a frying pan?

MCGRATH

Why?

JAKE

You remember how it feels? From
just that one little touch?

McGrath turns away, sensing the horror of what is coming.

MCGRATH
(softly)

Oh, God.

JAKE

Well, they were bombed on PCP.

MCGRATH

No, Jake.

Jake stares down, nodding; reaches for a plastic coffee cup, but its spilling -- his hands are shaking

too violently -- and he sets it down. He takes a drag of the cigarette, looking out at the basketball court. The hand holding the cigarette is shaking noticeably. And is it the cigarette smoke bringing moistness to his eyes?

JAKE

They fried the kid in oil in a skillet, Tom. They fried him alive.

AT THOMPSON

THOMPSON

(yelling)

Where were you supposed to be?
Where's your place?

THE GEORGETOWN CAMPUS QUADRANGLE

Quiet. A few students, priests. Dahlgren Chapel, covered with ivy.

MCGRATH (O.S.)

Why Albuquerque?

JAKE (O.S.)

It's peaceful, they said.

AT JAKE MCGRATH

strolling along the ground-floor corridor of the Healey Building.

JAKE

I'd have a chance to pull my nerves back together.

MCGRATH

Why not stay and take a desk job?

JAKE

(shaking head)

No. No good. I need to chase the bastards, Tom. I need it. Every scum that I nail means just that much less pain in the world.

This disturbs McGrath, and he stops to eye Jake, who stops with him.

JAKE
(defiantly)
I don't know if God's asleep or
doesn't care. But I do. I care.

INT. GASTON LECTURE HALL - DAY

A historic look about it. Tradition. It is filling
up with students.

CORRIDOR OUTSIDE GASTON HALL

FRONT TRACKING JAKE MCGRATH

Jake holds a slender, wrapped gift from McGrath.

MCGRATH
A little going-away present.
Your favorite.

JAKE
Cole?

MCGRATH
That one there's an original.
I hope your recorder plays 78.

JAKE
It plays nothing but.

MCGRATH
Yes, I know what you mean.

JAKE
Thanks, Tom.

MCGRATH
Enjoy it. Bring those cowboys
some culture.

They have stopped outside one of the doors to Gaston
Hall. Students passing, talking.

JAKE
What's the class?

MCGRATH
I'm teaching Chaucer this year.

JAKE
Even that sounds more exciting
than New Mexico.

MCGRATH

It's good, Jake. Something new.
A challenge.

JAKE

Yes, that's really what we need
in this world, more challenges.
Cancer and death are not enough.

The old priest studies the tortured face with compassion.

JAKE

No offense, and present company
excepted, understand, but
when I hear someone say, "I love
a challenge," I suspect that he's
a totally perfected asshole.

MCGRATH

Did you know that I lost my faith
once?

Jake shakes his head.

MCGRATH

Yes. And lately. I was chaplain
at a refugee camp in Thailand.
More like a prison. Watchtowers.
Guards. Barbed wire. And
thousands of refugees from
Vietnam. Whatever could it be
that they were running from, I
wondered, to this utter, this absolute
hell. In the camp they were starving,
and only one bottle of water a day --
one bottle -- for their drinking
and cooking and washing. And
the sickness! the open sores and
the pestilence! The children, Jake!
And the girls. The girls were the worst.
To get to this camp, Jake, they had
to run a gauntlet of four
raping armies. And some girls
as young as twelve, Jake!
The little ones, too! Raped by twenty,
thirty men and then tied to a railroad
track just to frighten them. Tom,
they couldn't speak, when I saw them.
Autistic. And all I could do was
to hold them in my arms, Jake,
day after day into awful night,

until at last they were able to
cry and I could give them to the
care of the doctors in the camp.
And that is when I lost my
faith. The girls, Jake. It was
the girls.

A silence. Jake nods in understanding.

MCGRATH

Then something happened.
I can't describe it. Like a voice.
The voice of God within me.
I don't know if I heard it or felt
it or what. All I know is that it
happened; it was real; it was the
Lord. And do you know what
he said to me, Jake? He said,
"Tom, I didn't ask you to solve
the problem of evil. That's my
problem. I asked you to care for
these people! These people!
Here! Now!"

JAKE

So I should "pay no attention to that
man behind the curtain," Tom? The Wizard
of Oz knows best?

MCGRATH

Jake, I'll miss you.

JAKE

I'll miss you, too.

MCGRATH

God bless you, Jake. And help you.

McGrath enters Gaston Hall. Then returns to Jake.

MCGRATH

Have you ever used your gun, Jake?
Shot someone?

Jake shakes his head.

MCGRATH

Could you?

Jake stares. He doesn't know the answer. McGrath again
searches his face.

MCGRATH

Jake, what is it?

JAKE

The kid.

MCGRATH

And what else? There's something else.

JAKE

I refused a dying man absolution.

INT. DAHLGREN CHAPEL ON G.U. CAMPUS -DAY

We are back and SHOOTING at the doors as Jake slowly enters, stops, staring up past our POV. Sadness. Longing. Despair.

POV THE ALTAR

Hold for a beat. Then we HEAR Jake's footsteps receding, a door swinging open.

LS AT CHAPEL DOOR

It is swinging back shut with a slow and melancholy creak. On the closing thud:

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE OUTSKIRTS - DESERT - DAWN

A gigantic orange orb of the sun is slipping upward from below the rim of the world and sky and desert are filled with Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." Heat haze. In the foreground, a trailer camp. Total population: three trailers. Great spaces separate them from each other.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - DAWN

In here is the music source -- a tape deck. Jake is in the final stages of unpacking, of placing photographs and personal items. The effect is of neatness and austerity: a monastic cell. From an open suitcase, Jake takes a few shirts and places them in a drawer. We see grey-flannel suits on clothes poles, plain black shoes, a felt hat. Besides the tape deck, a record player; tapes and records; an automated chess machine. Jake takes a small framed photo from the suitcase, stares at it; then tenderly places it on a small desk. We cannot see the subject, though we might infer that it is a girl. There is love and an infinite sadness in Jake's eyes as he regards it. It makes him conscious of the Beethoven. He turns it off. A sudden silence. He looks for the gift from McGrath, finds it, unwraps it, removes the record from its sheath, then carefully places it on record player, turns the player on. We HEAR an orchestral arrangement of Cole Porter's "I Concentrate on You." Jake lights a cigarette, sits on the edge of his bunk and listens. Remembering. He turns to stare at the girl in the photograph. At last he lies back on his bunk, until a beeper signal breaks the spell. Jake stops the music, goes to a radio communicating device, turns off beeper, flips a switch.

INT. FBI REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS OFFICE - DAY

A ten-man office in a brand new Federal building. Computers, dictaphones, teletypes, electronic illuminated maps. Field agents work at or out of desks in a central bull pen. A dispatcher monitors radio traffic in a glass-walled office to one side.

JAKE'S VOICE (RADIO)

Pepper.

The DISPATCHER flips a switch.

DISPATCHER

Arapahoe Control. Proceed to the loading dock in the alley back of the B and G warehouse on Euclid and Chestnut. Meet up with other agents at eight a.m.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - DAWN

DISPATCHER'S VOICE (RADIO)

Come ready to work. Do you copy?

JAKE

I copy.

EXT. WAREHOUSE LOADING PLATFORM - EARLY MORNING

Chattering routinely, on the platform are perhaps two dozen FBI AGENTS wearing rough gear: bluejeans, mackinaws, boots. Each man has a rifle. As we come in to a CLOSER ANGLE of two of the agents talking, one of them stops in mid-sentence, as he sees something o.s.

AGENT'S POV JAKE

He is standing, below the platform, staring up at the agents there. He is immaculately attired in a three-piece gray suit, the black shoes, conservative tie and hat.

AT BACK OF OPEN TRUCK

as it pulls away from the loading platform. The agents are aboard, all chattering, except for Jake, who stands facing us expressionlessly from the back of the truck where he stands with a rifle in the midst of his colleagues, still in his Brooks Brothers suit.

EXT. WIDE SHOT - FBI TRUCK ROLLING THROUGH DESERT

CLOSE AT JAKE FOURTH AGENT

JAKE

Where are we going exactly?

FOURTH AGENT

Indians.

JAKE

Excuse me?

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING IN SMALL NEW MEXICO TOWN - DAY

Masses of townspeople, police, media. Leaning out from a school building window, a sheet of paper in one hand, an automatic rifle in the other, is what appears to be an INDIAN BRAVE in full regalia; bare-chested, long hair braided into two ponytails. Flourishing the sheet of paper, he shouts at the crowd.

INDIAN BRAVE

No, we're not coming out of this building until all of our demands on this paper have been met!

AT JAKE FBI AGENTS

As other agents leap down from the back of the truck, Jake is staring off at the Indian brave, quietly incredulous. This Indian is manifestly light in the moccasins.

INDIAN BRAVE (O.S.)

You hear? We're just staying here and all your guns and your things don't scare us!

AT INDIAN BRAVE

INDIAN BRAVE

This is our land and not yours, you bullies!

With this, he tosses his head, shaking back his ponytails, while his hand touches up the hair at his temples as he stares down at:

JAKE OTHER AGENTS

Jake stares back in quiet disawe, which is a combination of awe and disbelief.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - SUNSET

His jacket and vest already off and neatly hung, he is washing off the dust at a basin. He dries, pours himself a scotch, turns on cassette player, sits on his bunk, lights a cigarette, sips the scotch and listens to the music: "You'd Be So Easy to Love."

EXT. TRAILER COURT - SUNSET

Pied glory. We hear the music from Jake's trailer.

INT. FBI REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS - DAY

We are in the office of the Special Agent in Charge, MAX WEIS. We are SHOOTING FRONT at him as he sits at his desk, working at some papers. He scribbles something on one of them and puts it into an out-basket. In the process, something O.S. catches his eye.

JAKE

Standing, his suit jacket slung over his back, he takes a document from a basket on his desk and studies it in silence.

WEIS (O.S.)

Hey, Pepper.

Jake looks up at the voice, starts to approach Weis's office. We TRACK FRONT with him until he stops in Weis's office.

WEIS

(paternal concern)

How're you doin', kid? You makin' out okay?

Jake nods stoically. If he's having a problem adjusting to the pace, his sense of dignity precludes him from letting us know it. Weis aims a pencil at the assignment sheet in Jake's hand.

WEIS

Penasco's maybe two hours' drive. Pretty country.

Jake nods.

WEIS

Just a routine security check.

Jake raises the paper to his eyes, silently scrutinizing it.

JAKE
(politely)
Yes, I know, sir.

WEIS
Stop complaining, Pepper.

JAKE
(lowering the paper)
Yes, sir.

WEIS
It's the same here for all of us.
Nothing ever happens in these parts.

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

Alone on a narrow and seemingly endless bolt of road in the middle of nowhere, Jake's car is a fly speck in infinity. Heat haze shimmers off the highway.

EXT. COTTONWOOD TREES - MORNING

Their leaves tremble and flash in the morning wind.
The SOUND OF A RIVER.

EXT. RIVER - MORNING

A strong river, thirty or forty yards wide, moving between low banks and occasional clumps of cottonwood and willow. It is like a river in Eden, sweet and clear and undisturbed. Something flicks through the air and dances on the water. A trout fly.

And now we see the fisher: ADDIE MASON. Wearing waders, she stands deep in the river, reeling in a fly line. She is fine -- early thirties, perhaps, with sun-bleached hair and tanned skin. A "natural" beauty, a "Girl of the Golden West," she is lithe and strong, her movements sure and graceful and she's easy with her beauty. In her eyes there is a promise of merriment. Around her neck, a gold chain and cross. She begins stripping off line to cast again, her expression one of beatific concentration. She looks up toward the SOUND of an approaching automobile that has invaded the scene.

EXT. JAKE'S CAR - MORNING

In the distance, kicking up dust.

INT. JAKE'S CAR - MORNING

Jake is sweating and stoically pissed off; smoking. The car windows are open. Jake is jiggling A/C control. He bangs on the dash. It's obviously not working. Now the engine sounds ill and labored. Jake sees something through the car windshield. In a murmur that is as unreadable as his face:

JAKE
God is great.

POV THROUGH FRONT WINDSHIELD

White billows of smoke swirl up from under the hood.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

The engine smoking, Jake pulls the car off the road.

EXT. RIVER ADDIE - MORNING

She looks up on HEARING a HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLE -Jake's carburetor.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The sun is higher and Jake is hiking toward us, his abandoned car far in the background. He stops, his eyes on something O.S., behind us, and puts on the jacket that had been held slung over his shoulder.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

CLOSE AT GAS STATION OWNER (CLAUDE HOSKINS)

An old man, his face hide-tanned and weathered. He chews on a reed, leaned back on a rude wooden bench, staring thoughtfully and skeptically O.S. at Jake.

FULL SHOT THE SCENE

It is a dilapidated, one-pump operation. We can HEAR the desultory SOUNDS of car repair from a service stall. Jake approaches the old man, stops. The old man flicks his vaguely disapproving and curious stare at Jake's shoes.

JAKE
My car broke down.

CLAUDE
Not surprised.

JAKE
It's a mile down the road. Can you tow it?

CLAUDE
Not much. No tow-truck.
(shouts off)
Byron!
(SOUND of a
TOOL DROPPING
to ground)
Can't pee like I used to, neither.
(illustrates with
gestures of his
right hand)
Goes to here 'stead of there.
I get the blues.

Approaching from the service shed is BYRON, the pudgy,
grease-stained young mechanic.

BYRON
What, Claude.

CLAUDE
Man's car pooped out up the road some.
Probably the heat, though it could be
meanness.
(gesturing to
Jake, then Byron)
Let him have the keys, he'll take
a look at it.

JAKE
(reaching into pocket,
then handing over keys)
Thank you.

CLAUDE
Sure. I'm kindly.

JAKE
The ignition key's the square
one.

CLAUDE
Always is.

BYRON
(to Claude)
It's almost lunch time.

CLAUDE
Always is. You can eat when
you get back.
(to Jake)
You come with me.

He turns, and Jake follows toward the station office. Byron, looking hurt and sullen, his lower lip edging upward in a pout, glares as if betrayed, then grudgingly and very slowly shuffles away, deliberately kicking up dust with each step.

CLAUDE

Things is mean, ya know. Malicious.
Hate us. They're the natives here.
Things. We landed.

At the door to the office, the old man pauses for an appraising glance at Byron, then enters!

INT. GAS STATION OFFICE - DAY

Through the windows, we can see Byron pulling out in a small pickup truck. Jake is entering. The old man goes to a high shelf, takes a receipt book and pencil from a drawer as Jake enters behind him. A soft drinks machine.

CLAUDE

Let me have your name.

JAKE

Jake Pepper.

CLAUDE

Jake's enough. You want to wait for Doctor Byron's diagnosis or don't you like pukin' this early in the day? There's a bad motel in town. You gonna stay there? People with friends here usually do.

JAKE

How do you know the repairs will take that long?

CLAUDE

I got a feelin'.

JAKE

Can I use your phone?

CLAUDE

I got a feelin' in my "Byron Indicator." Just because it's down south don't necessarily mean that it's wrong.

JAKE

The phone?

CLAUDE

Phone's broke. Mebbe Byron can lift
ya to the town when he comes back.
Which, o' course, could be tomorrow.

Through the window, we see a garish-colored Mercedes limo pull up by the gas pump. Chauffer-driven. A man and a woman in the back. The car draws an expensive-looking horse trailer. The old man opens a cash register drawer, takes out a quarter and slaps it on the shelf as he stares out at the limo.

CLAUDE

Go on and have yourself a sodey
pop, sonny, while you pray on it.
(shuffling out
of office)
Tubbs Chocolate Peach Ripple's all
that's left. Union soldiers took the
rest in '86.

Jake watches him depart, then takes the quarter and deposits it in the soft drinks machine. He pushes the button, the can slides down, he takes it, stares at the label with a mild, deadpan incredulity.

EXT. FULL SHOT GAS STATION - DAY

As the old man shuffles toward the car, Jake will exit the office and sit in the shade on the bench, watching as he sips at his drink. The limo rear window is sliding down as:

CLAUDE

Mornin', rich and powerful Bob.
The usual and put it on your bill,
or are ya plannin' just to set
there relishin' our hateful and
envious thoughts?

INT. BACK SEAT OF LIMO - DAY

BOB AND JUANITA QUINN

Quinn's face is broad but gaunt, hollow-cheeked, weather-coarsened -- the face of a medieval peasant, the man behind the plow with all the cares of the world lashed to his back. He wears thin wire-rimmed glasses, and behind the thick lenses are eyes that are at once alert, suspicious, intelligent, merry and tolerantly superior. He has a hospitable laugh and voice. The most salient impression is of firmness sheathing a thorough and dependable decency. He is reading the Wall Street Journal.

Juanita conveys a sexy but patrician air, the pride of one who knows she had much to overcome, and did it, but is still ever aware of the place of the Hispanic in the West of the Wasp. She overcompensates, perhaps to an edge of smoky ice. Never mind -- she has legs that run up to her navel.

At the old man's greeting, Quinn laughs good-naturedly, nods and waves a hand, while other presses a button that lowers a rear window on his side.

QUINN
(calling out
to old man)
How's the missus?

CLAUDE
She was warm the last time I
touched her, but that was two
years ago, Bob.

QUINN
You be good to her, Claude.

CLAUDE
Always am.

As the old man puts the gas nozzle into the Mercedes tank, Quinn settles back with his newspaper.

QUINN
What a character. But I cherish
his honest soul. That's the
only real water in this desert --
honor.

He sees that Juanita is staring out the window, and he follows her gaze to Jake, who is seated on the bench, the drink in his hand. He is a sweaty, disheveled mess.

SHOT AT JAKE THROUGH LIMO WINDOW

JAKE
Excuse me, are you going to
Penasco?

INT. LIMO - DAY

QUINN
(to Juanita)
Do I have to be Christ-like, Juanita?

JUANITA
Not so much.

AT LIMO JAKE'S POV

The rear window silently rolls up with a soft electronic whirring sound.

ANGLE THROUGH WINDOW AT JAKE

Jake stares at us blankly. After a pause, he buttons his top shirt button, tightens his tie, rises and advances to the car window. He slips out his wallet, holds his I.D. up against the window glass.

QUINN (O.S.)

Why, he's an F.B.I. man, Juanita!

The window slips down with an electronic whir.

JAKE

Could you help me, please? My car's broken down and I have an appointment with Sheriff Andersen.

The old man appears, puts his head down to the window.

CLAUDE

I can vouch for this man. He's a personal friend of Byron's.

INT. LIMO - QUINN AND JUANITA

Unlatching the car door:

QUINN

Forgive our bad manners, my friend. Hop in.

EXT. LIMO - DAY

The old man pulls open the car door for Jake.

CLAUDE

(to Jake)

Byron's highly influential in these parts. The man's feared.

JAKE

You can leave word for me at Sheriff Andersen's.

CLAUDE

(as Jake enters car)

Phone's broke. Come by in the mornin'.

INT. LIMO - DAY

As Jake gets into a facing jump seat, the old man leans in.

CLAUDE

Appreciate the trade, Rich and Powerful
Bob, and the goose ya done put in our
post office box. All the world loves
a colorful and generous despot.

We HEAR Quinn's LAUGHTER before we:

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SHOT - DAY

The limo tooling along.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Juanita's head is a little to one side as she coolly
stares at Jake as if trying to place him. Quinn has his paper
in front of him, giving the impression he's making polite
conversation while reading.

JAKE

No, it's something routine.

QUINN

That's for sure. Nothing happens
in these parts.

JAKE

Yes, it seems a quiet place.

QUINN

Thank God.

Juanita turns and looks at Quinn in quiet disbelief; as if
she cannot believe what she just heard; she glances briefly
at Jake, checking his reaction, then stares down at his shoes.
Meantime, Quinn has turned to look out his window as he
continues:

QUINN

It's always peaceful in these
parts. The land is quiet. Only
the river runs headlong here.

Jake sees Juanita staring at his shoes; he looks down at them
himself until Quinn turns back from the window to his
newspaper. *Juanita is staring intently at his face again.*

QUINN

You like country, Mister Pepper?

JAKE

Yes. But it takes some adjusting.

QUINN

Where'd you come from? I mean,
where were you assigned?

JAKE

New York.

JUANITA

You're the one.

QUINN

What's that, Juanita?

JUANITA

(gaze still
fixed on Jake)

I recognize your face from the
newspaper. You're the one who
found the kidnapped baby.

JAKE

(looks out window)

Much too late, ma'am.

JUANITA

(swiftly blessing
herself as, sadly:)

Yes, I know. God have mercy on
that child. But it wasn't your
fault. They said no other agent
would have found him at all; that
you're a genius.

QUINN

(at Juanita)

You remember that?

JAKE

(quietly)

It simply isn't true, ma'am.

JUANITA

How modest.

QUINN

(examining Juanita's
face)

Why, look at that glow in your eyes.

And indeed, from the moment of recognition, Juanita's

face and manner have registered a smokily erotic and excited admiration.

QUINN

(to Jake)

Nothing turns on my wife
except intelligence.

JAKE

(uncomfortable;
the diplomat)

That speaks well for your mind,
Mister Quinn. Mine is vastly
overrated.

CU JUANITA

JUANITA

I don't think so.

EXT. PENASCO MAIN STREET - DAY

It looks like a town of three to four thousand people, out in the middle of ranch and farm country. Tourists don't stop here, but people who move away from Penasco remember it with a certain nostalgia. The air is clean, the people are friendly, and it projects the warmth and security of a mother's kitchen.

The limo pulls up in front of the Sheriff's office.
Jake gets out, leans down to window.

JAKE

I'm much obliged to you both.

Jake doesn't wait for the reply, turning to head for Sheriff's office.

QUINN

Walk softly.

INT. LIMO - DAY

The Quinns stare after Jake.

JUANITA

He smells like a priest.

Quinn turns to look at her, then turns back to watch the receding Jake.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Around the walls and on shelves a variety of wood carvings. The Sheriff -- CLEM ANDERSEN -- is on the telephone. A sexy girl deputy -- CLYDENE -- is placing a paper cup of coffee and two cookies on his desk. A tall, stocky man, Clem resembles John Candy. Easily loving, open and generous, he is man who loves life and the world. There is a childlike innocence about him, and he is totally incapable of guile. Outside Clem's office, a combination Outer Office/Dispatch Office, other deputies, a police radio, TWX machine etc. While he speaks on the phone, Clem stares dismally at the cookies.

CLEM

(into phone)

Well, what was he doin' climbin'
down the side of the church
in the first place?

(listens briefly)

Playin' Dracula?

(listens briefly
again)

And he thought that the ivy
would hold him. Mrs. Kinyon,
could you hold it one second?
Please.

Clem covers the telephone mouthpiece with his hand.

CLEM

(plaintively)

Clydene, I wanted peanut butter
cookies.

CLYDENE

They were out of them.

CLEM

(pain)

They were?

Clydene is exiting past Jake, who has just appeared
at the door.

JAKE

Sheriff Andersen?

CLEM

Come in.

Clem motions him to a chair and Jake sits as Clem resumes
his phone conversation. But Jake remains standing.

CLEM

Look, Missus Kinyon? I don't know if it's really all that powerful practical to go arrestin' a nine-year-old boy.

(listens briefly)

Even if it is your son. It's sorta --

(listens)

Yes, I know that he sassed you, Missus Kinyon.

(listens)

And then tried to drink your blood. Missus Kinyon, these things can sometimes happen. Look, I really have to run now, ma'am. When he's better, make a citizen's arrest.

He puts the phone on cradle.

CLEM

(to Jake)

How do.

Jake holds up his I.D.

JAKE

I'm Pepper.

CLEM

I could tell that when I looked at your shoes.

Slightly hurt and disturbed, Jake stares down at his shoes, wondering what's wrong with them as:

CLEM

(continuing)

Sit down and take a load off your feet. Want some coffee? Cookies? Anything.

(Clem is sitting
back of desk)

Can't seem to think after twelve without my cookies. What'll it be?

JAKE

Could you find me some scotch?

Like a shot, Clem's hand darts into a cranny of his desk and in a flash comes up with a bottle of J. and B. and slaps it onto the desk with:

CLEM

It might be hard.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

We are against the window, looking in on Claude, who stands hunched over a ledger of accounts. A shadow falls upon him and very slowly he looks up.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

CLAUDE'S POV

Pressed close to the glass front outside is Byron, glowering with sullen discontent and doom. He holds up a thumb and jabs it downward, signing defeat.

CU CLAUDE

CLAUDE

Good news travels fast.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Clem has his feet on his desk, a clipboard and files on his lap. Jake is in a chair pulled up by the desk. His jacket is off and his tie loosened, telling us he's at ease with Clem as he scrawls a note into his notebook. Both men sip at shot glasses of scotch as they work.

JAKE

And Addie Mason?

CLEM

Good old Addie.

JAKE

Where do I find her?

CLEM

Over at the school. That's two blocks north and just one to the east. She teaches fourth grade. Great woman.

JAKE

(writing)

I'm sure.

CLEM

Great woman. She can put a bullet through a man's eyes at a hundred yards and she knows enough karate to split an oak plank with a chop of her hand.

JAKE

Great woman.

CLEM
I know. Hey, Jake, look
at this.

Jake glances up. Clem has reached and taken a wood
carving from a shelf, slides it over to Jake. It is
a strange, layered wood-carving.

JAKE
(eyeing it)
Yes?

CLEM
What do you think of it? Honestly.

JAKE
What is it?

CLEM
Can't you tell?

Jake shakes his head.

CLEM
A stack of pancakes.
I carved it out of pine.

JAKE
It's very delicate.

CLEM
It's different. Now I'm workin' on
a hot fudge sundae. It's a challenge.

As Clem sips his drink and turns a page in a ledger,
Jake stares at him for one inscrutable moment, then
puts his head down to his notebook.

JAKE
My car broke down and I don't
know when it's going to be
ready. Is there one that I can
borrow for a couple of hours?

CLEM
You can use my jeep.

JAKE
That's very kind.

CLEM
You stayin' over?

Clem has the scotch bottle in hand and is about to refill

Jake's glass, but Jake puts his hand over the glass as he shakes his head.

JAKE

Depends on the car. What's the local motel like?

CLEM

There's opinion that the streets of Laredo are cleaner.

(pouring himself
more scotch)

One good thing: bedbugs don't go near it. There's critters in the mattresses they're a'scared of. Better come and stay at our house, friend. Love to have ya.

JAKE

No, I couldn't put you out.

CLEM

We love company. Really.

JAKE

Well, let's hope it won't be necessary.

CLEM

Jake, I'm kinda hopin' that it will. You're good company. Not everyone appreciates my carvin's.

EXT. GAS STATION REPAIR BAY - DAY

Jake's car. It is virtually disassembled. Working under the hood, Byron's pounds at something with a short-handled sledgehammer.

INT. GAS STATION OFFICE - DAY

AT CLAUDE

He's sitting in a chair. We HEAR Byron hammering.

CLAUDE

Sure, I knowed Joe Mannix since forever. Only bad thing he done was to teepee our house one night. You ever teepee a house?

REVERSE ANGLE

Seated making notes is Jake. He looks blank.

JAKE
I don't know what that means.

AT CLAUDE

CLAUDE
Yup, it figures.

He has dropped his gaze meaningfully to what we know
what must be Jake's shoes. Jake stares blankly.

EXT. PENASCO MAIN STREET - DAY

We are SHOOTING down the length of the street. To the
side, in f.g. of FRAME, a shoe store. Jake emerges,
hobbling slowly and awkwardly in a new pair of western
boots.

REAR ANGLE JAKE

as he clumps along.

INT. PENASCO SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

MLS JAKE

He hobbles toward us, checking classroom numbers along
the hall. We HEAR SOUNDS from the classrooms: recitations,
teachers' homework instructions. Then SCHOOL BELL RINGS and
Jake is inundated by the rush of escaping bodies as the
children tumble into the hall with shouts and cries. When
Jake reaches CAMERA POV, he stops. The door to the classroom
he wants is right beside us. As he takes a step to approach
it, he abruptly freezes.
AT CLASSROOM JAKE'S POV

Standing behind the desk handing out papers to two or
three of her PUPILS is ADDIE MASON, the girl we saw fishing
in the river. Later we will come to know her as open, frank,
direct, fresh and unguarded, a young woman of perhaps thirty
streaked with a wit and a wildness that is on the pure side;
a type of Jean Arthur characterization. But for now we see
only her gentleness dealing with the children.

AT JAKE

Taken aback, and advancing a hesitant step or two
toward the classroom before stopping, still staring,
his eyes and face now filled with a melancholy, a
fondness and a sweetness.

AT CLASSROOM ADDIE - JAKE'S POV

She is leaning low over the desk, talking to a child, when she abruptly notices Jake staring. She is still; stares back with a questioning surmise; then straightens as she dismisses the child.

INT. ADDIE'S CLASSROOM

She stands behind her desk, hands clasped before her, watching Jake slowly enter, trying desperately not to hobble in the boots. Addie, repressing a smile, glances down at Jake's curious walk. A few feet from her, he stops.

ADDIE
New boots?

JAKE
You can tell?

ADDIE
Yes, the label's still on them.

And, swiftly, naturally, and unexpectedly, she stoops and tears the label string from each boot. Straightening:

ADDIE
(wryly deadpan)
Now no one would ever guess that
they're new.
(eyeing the tags)
Oh, I've done an awful thing.
One says Left," one says "Right."

Fighting down a grin, so that only the ghost of it survives, and quietly taking and pocketing the tags:

JAKE
Are you Addie Mason?

ADDIE
Yes, I am.

JAKE
(showing I.D.)
Jake Pepper.

Addie covers a giggle with her hand. As Jake stares, uncomprehending:

JAKE
Ma'am?

ADDIE
That's really your name?

JAKE
(straight-faced)
I'm doing a background investigation
on a boy in your class when you taught
tenth grade.

ADDIE
Oh, I see.

JAKE
Just routine. He's applied for a
job with the C.I.A.

AT ADDIE

She is seated in chair behind her desk.

ADDIE
Yes, he was a wonderful, boring boy
and very comfortable with shadows and
things. You know, slinky. But terribly
froopy as well. You could trust him.

FULL SHOT THE CLASSROOM

Addie at desk, Jake crammed into a pupil's chair, writing
in his notebook.

JAKE
Good.

ADDIE
To be absolutely, maddeningly
mischievous.

(as Jake looks up
in dismay)
Of course, he'd fantastic for this
job. He was always keen on poking
into things, mostly freckled little
girls in the cloak-room. I utterly
adored him. Are you blushing?

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

It's quiet. Everyone has gone except for Jake and Addie, who
approach from the far end of the hall, Jake's halting footsteps
echoing against the lockers. Addie has a hand on Jake's arm,
as if guiding and supporting.

ADDIE
No, the heels are supposed to feel
loose. You'll get the hang of it.

JAKE
(with a delicate
edge in his voice)
You can let go of me now.

ADDIE
(wryly)
Shall I help you to your car?

JAKE
You're very kind.

INT. CLEM'S OFFICE - CLEM - DAY

CLEM
Didn't hear ya comin'.

AT JAKE

He's holding the boots in one hand, is shoeless, and in his
expression, though it is stoical, one may read matters deep.

AT CLEM

CLEM
Uh-oh.

He reaches under desk, comes up with a full scotch bottle.
As he peels off the plastic around the cap:

CLEM
Time ta talk sense.

CLOSE AT THE SCOTCH BOTTLE

Time has passed and now only an eighth of an inch
remains at the bottom.

CLEM (O.S.)
Sure, Claude. I'll tell him.

FULL SHOT - CLEM JAKE

Clem is sitting with his feet up on his desk, while Jake
sits on edge of small sofa against office wall, staring down
into his glass of scotch. Clem is hanging up telephone as:

CLEM
He said his phone got fixed and
if one more miracle happens your
car will be ready by tomorrow noon.

TAKES

CLEM

He said maybe for sure.

Jake knocks back the rest of his drink.

CLEM

My hat's off to you, pardner.
Boy, can you hold it. Where'd
you ever learn to drink like
that? The Army?

JAKE

Kind of an army.

CLEM

(picking up bottle
and eyeing the dregs)
You must have been a Green Beret.

JAKE

(the ghost of
a wistful smile)
No, black.

CLEM

Never heard of no Black Berets.
Now I know why you hardly ever
talk. I bet your breath could bring
the dead back to life.

JAKE

That would be nice.

Tilting the bottle for another examination:

CLEM

Phew! Who was that masked man?

JAKE

(getting up,
holding up his
empty glass)
Thanks, Clem.

CLEM

You stayin' at the Armpit Lodge
or are you comin' home with me to
good folks and good eats?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EARLY EVENING

FRONT MOVING SHOT CLEM'S JEEP JAKE CLEM

Jake beside him, Clem drives a most eccentric vehicle: no top and no windshield, just a jeep engine with four wheels. On the driver's side, a rifle holster is affixed, a hunting rifle in it. Clem is munching zestfully on a Snickers candy bar as:

CLEM

Yeah, I call it my "pot
luck" wagon. Comes a deer
or a moose across the road
and -

(he pantomimes
shooting through
windshield)

Bang! You've got a quick,
clear shot.

JAKE

I understand.

CLEM

It's really great.

JAKE

Have you gotten much game
this way?

CLEM

(thin-lipped)

I will.

Clem turns the wheel onto:

EXT. SMALLER ROAD - ALLEY OF TREES - EVENING

The jeep turns onto a road between two lines of tall cottonwoods, a lovely stretch of country. We are far in front of them as we hear, distantly:

CLEM

I liked it better when you
were quiet.

JAKE

Are you sure I'm not putting you
out?

CLEM

No way. We've got loads of room.

ROAD AND PASTURE - EVENING

The road comes out of the trees and runs alongside a big pasture with a half dozen horses in it, then a neat frame house comes into view, and out of the front door pours a throng of CHILDREN of assorted ages, waving and calling out in greeting. Clem waves back.

CLEM

Hi, kids!

The children rush to swarm around the jeep.

FULL AT JEEP

The children all over their father. The youngest -- JOSIE, aged seven -- is in his lap, her arms around him.

CLOSE AT JAKE

A little sadness. This is something he's missed; never had.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

It is a huge country kitchen with large wooden refectory dining table. Standing at sink counter with a load of fish, are Addie, Clem's wife, AMY, and Amy's elderly mother, VIOLET. Addie wears rough sportsman's clothes, still hasn't removed her jacket as she dumps her morning's catch into the sink.

ADDIE

I thought you'd like some
fried trout tonight. I caught
these this morning.

AMY

Some catch.
(holds up a
big trout)
Look at this one.

Addie is removing her jacket, and the mother is moving in to the sink.

VIOLET

I'll clean them.

ADDIE

Oh, they're gutted and cleaned.

AMY
Bless your heart.

VIOLET
(disappointed)
I like cleaning them.
(eyeing fish
in sink regretfully)
Sparkly little scales.

From O.S., the SOUND of the front door opening; Clem, Jake and the children coming in.

CLEM
We got company, Amy!

AMY
(calling back)
Good! The more the merrier, I say!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLEM'S HOUSE - EVENING

Clem still has Josie in his arms. A little boy --BILLY, aged nine -- is tugging at his trousers, trying to get his attention. The other children are between nine and thirteen and they too are seeking his attention, everyone talking at once. Jake is hanging back by the front door, watching.

CLEM
(at the children)
Now hush up.
(indicating Jake)
He's a Black Beret and
he likes it quiet.

Amy exits from kitchen, wiping her hands on her apron.

AMY
Scoot you, children! Scoot!
Go study now!

Amy's is apparently the voice of authority in this household, for the children are already taking off as:

AMY (CONT'G)
Scatter like the autumn leaves!

She's moving toward Clem and Jake.

CLEM
But I just got here.

AMY

Your breath arrived an hour
and a half ago.

(extending hand
to Jake)

Hi there, I'm Amy. Who are you?

CLEM

Honey, this is Jake Pepper
with the FBI.

AMY

(cordially as she
takes his hand and
shakes it)

Federal Bureau of Intoxication?
Your breath is even stronger, Mister
Pepper. You must work at this.

CLEM

(turning to Jake)

What did I say?

AMY

About what?

CLEM

Nothin', sugar. Jake's car broke
down. He's gonna stay with us
tonight. Ain't ya, Jake?

JAKE

Oh, well, no, I don't think so.

CLEM

You said!

AMY

There's no problem, Mister Pepper.
(to Clem)

I'll put Billy and Josie
in their sleeping bags.

CLEM

(to Jake)

Which they love! They love those
sleeping bags even more than party
balloons and parades!

Addie appears in the kitchen door.

ADDIE

Why, hello again.

AT ADDIE

Smiling.

AT JAKE

As his gaze turns to her and that haunted look comes into his eyes again, sweet and deeply fond.

JAKE
(softly)

Hello again.

INT. CLEM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jake, Addie and the Andersens are at the dinner table. Dinner is being eaten. Throughout, the frail Violet quietly forks staggering quantities of food into her mouth without cessation while listening wide-eyed and attentively to the table conversation. Jake isn't eating. He's watching Addie.

ADDIE
Amy, this is great.

JAKE
Really wonderful, ma'am.

CLEM
Amen.

AMY
It was Addie did the hard part,
catching the fish.

ADDIE
Which takes a brain about the
size of a lima bean. Cooking it's
the thing.

CLEM
(raising his water
glass)
God bless the cooks!

ADDIE
(raising her glass)
Hear, hear!

JOSIE
(in her little voice)
And the Fudgesicles.

As all laugh, except Jake, whose silent gaze remains on Addie:

CU JAKE

CLEM (O.S.)
Now are those my genes or what!

CU FULL SHOT THE KITCHEN

Quieter. The children have left the table. Empty dessert dishes. Brandy and cigarette time, except for Violet, who is still eating dessert.

ADDIE

You're a very quiet man, Mister Pepper.

CLEM

Isn't he?

ADDIE

I'll bet people have been handing you a lot of bull about our nice little town. You must think we're really boring.

CLEM

(a mild but
sincere surprise)

We're not?

ADDIE

Well, this may seem to be a Garden of Eden, Mister Pepper, but we do have our witchcraft aficionados, our dope fiends and our wife swappers. All of the things that make life worth living.

CU AT VIOLET

Still forking pie into her mouth, her eyes grown wider as she listens with a smile of relish to:

ADDIE (O.S.)

We've even got fellahs wearing
panties underneath their dungarees.

FULL SHOT THE TABLE

Jake lowers his gaze to his coffee as Clem takes a cigar from his shirt pocket and offers it to Jake. But Jake is taking his cigarettes from his shirt pocket.

CLEM

Would you like a cigar, Jake?

JAKE

Not this minute.

As Addie strikes a match and lights Jake's cigarette:

ADDIE

Are we interesting now or just
cowflop?

(Jake coughs
on the smoke)

I'd much rather light your cigar.

Clem, seemingly oblivious to the double entendre, routinely
proffers a dish of mints to Jake, who remains inscrutable.

CLEM

Have a mint, Jake.

ADDIE

I'm partial to the smell of
cigars. If I smoked I think
I'd smoke cigars for days and
days and days.

CLEM

Addie, who's wearin' panties under his
jeans?

AMY

(picking up a dish
or two as she rises)

I think I'll start on the dishes.

ADDIE

(to Jake)

You're stone.

(rising; to Amy)

Let me help you.

Following Addie with his gaze as the women go toward the
sink to start doing dishes:

CLEM

I don't want any deputies
of mine doin' that.

ADDIE

They don't. I've checked.

CLEM

(to Jake)

She don't mean that. She don't
fool around or nothin'. Hell,
she even turned down "Honest Bob."

Clem's daughter Josie comes up to him.

JOSIE
Daddy, Billy hurt my feelings.

CLEM
He did?

FRONT SHOT AT SINK ADDIE AMY

They speak softly, a womanly conspiracy. B.G., Clem's conversation with Josie is indistinct, but we see him sit her on his lap as the women run the tap water to cover their conversation.

ADDIE
The man's a hunk.

AMY
The way he keeps staring
at you.

ADDIE
I know. It makes me feel
like he's mentally
stripping off every stitch
that I'm wearing, one by one.

AMY
It looks a little more
fatherly to me.

ADDIE
Are you crazy?

CLOSE AT JAKE

staring toward Addie as we HEAR Amy, and then Addie, giggle low O.S. and:

JOSIE (O.S.)
Well, it wasn't very funny.

CLEM (O.S.)
No, sweetheart, I don't think
it was funny either.

JOSIE (O.S.)
He said "'brux'" to me, Daddy.

CLEM (O.S.)
"Brux" is a terrible word.

JOSIE (O.S.)
He's always picking on me.

CLEM (O.S.)
No, it's just how little
boys are.

Jake turns toward Clem and Josie's conversation, registering warm approval, an admiration for Clem's tenderness with his daughter.

FEATURE CLEM JOSIE

Josie is on Clem's lap, her knuckle rubbing at the corner of a teary eye.

CLEM
They're just mean little skunks
that grow up to be a total.

JOSIE
What's that?

CLEM
It's the orneriest thing in the
world. It sounds like a thousand
rabbits screamin', smells like
two-million-year-old cat breath,
and the whole smelly thing is
all made out of lip.

CU JAKE

Smiling warmly. Josie laughs.

JOSIE
Oh, Daddy!

CLEM JOSIE

CLEM
(kisses her; then:)
Just be glad you're a girl. Now
get ready for bed.

AT ADDIE - AMY

Amy turns back to us from looking around at Jake.

AMY
I think the man just smiled!

ADDIE
Oh, my God!

AMY
I think you've got him where you
want him.

ADDIE
Table's fine.

CLEM JAKE

More conspiratorial laughter from the women as:

CLEM
A little after-dinner somethin'?

JAKE
(shaking head,
sipping coffee)
No thanks.

Clem's son Billy has erupted into scene, fronting his father. Billy is in pajamas, carries his toothbrush and has a mouthful of toothpaste.

BILLY
Josie said that I stink and then she
told me to shut up!

Clem drops his hands to his sides, as if to gun holsters.

CLEM
Want to see my fast draw?

BILLY
Yeah, let me see it!

Clem's hands do not move an inch, yet:

CLEM
Want to see it again?

CU JAKE

A little laugh, but a very big smile, innocent and happy.

AT ADDIE AMY

Amy pretends to go limp.

AMY
I think I'm going to faint.

ADDIE
Not on my table.

INT. CLEM'S GARAGE - NIGHT

It's raining heavily outside. Lightning cracks, thunder.

Clem's garage is a wood-working operation, and we see that he is close to completing the construction of a canoe. He and Jake have drinks, are in casual conversation. Clem's scene with the children has changed Jake, relaxed him. He seems peaceful; optimistic.

CLEM

You know, you really ought to stay with us.

Jake shakes his head.

CLEM

Well, okay, but catch the rodeo tomorrow. You'll enjoy it. All the proceeds go to charity. Kids, ya know. Retarded. It's a really beauty show, ya know, and barbecue and chili is the best. "Honest Bob" sees to that, bless his heart.

JAKE

"Honest Bob?"

CLEM

Bob Quinn. You caught the ride from.

JAKE

"Rich and Powerful Bob."

CLEM

(with a laugh, nodding)

Yeah, right. Good man. A big hero in World War Two. He was one of them big dawgs, ya know, a colonel. Never mentions it himself, but to hear people tell it, "Honest Bob" single-handedly destroyed half of Germany and all of Japan that he thought he had time for. Though he did kill a couple of rustlers once.

(suddenly animated)

Tell ya a story! Bob's alone in saloon without his wife -- that's Juanita .

JAKE

Yes, I met her.

CLEM

Yeah, that's right. Now here's Bob in this saloon and this fellah commences to arguin' with him. No problem. Then this fellah -- who

was eighty-feet tall and
some ferocious, lemme say -- well,
he commences to poke Bob in the
chest with his finger. Done it
once, then twice, and then the third
time Bob plumb bit his finger right
off. He bit it off! You can't
push Bob, ya see.

JAKE

Yes, I can see that.

CLEM

Bob took him to a doctor and made
'im sew the finger back on, and
ever since that big gorilla's
loved Bob.

JAKE

Who wouldn't.

Laconically, and with an indifferent shrug:

CLEM

He's all right. At least ya
know where ya stand with the
man.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RAINSTORM

Jake is running toward a jeep, Addie's. The front door to
the house is open. In the doorway, Clem stands with his arm
around Amy's waist. Calling out as he runs:

JAKE

Thanks again!

CLEM

(loud, for Jake)

Who was that masked man, Amy?

INT. ADDIE'S JEEP - NIGHT - RAINSTORM

Jake gets in, pulls door shut. Addie waves to the
Andersens.

JAKE

Sweet people.

EXT. DOORWAY TO CLEM'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RAINSTORM

As we HEAR the jeep departing, we see Clem and Amy

framed in the front doorway of their home. Clem has an arm around Amy's waist, and both he and Amy have an arm up waving a farewell. Warm and innocent smiles light their faces. It's a Norman Rockwell painting.

AMY

I sure hope she gets laid tonight.

CLEM

Say a little prayer.

INT. JEEP - FRONT MOVING SHOT - NIGHT - RAIN

JAKE

Awfully nice of you to offer me a lift.

ADDIE

Oh, don't mention it, Mister Pepper.

JAKE

Jake.

ADDIE

(to herself)

Good.

JAKE

Excuse me?

ADDIE

Good Jake.

He stares at her in puzzled silence for a time, then stares straight ahead again.

ADDIE

You work out of New York, Jake?

JAKE

No.

And silence. She waits for something to come, then turns her head to him. He turns to her.

JAKE

Bad Jake?

She laughs. He smiles.

ADDIE

Jake, I know you didn't want to put the Andersens out, and that was really very sweet, but I live in this great big house with my sister and you're

welcome to stay over. Are you set
on the motel?

JAKE
Yes, I think so.

EXT. "THE STARLIGHT MOTEL" - NIGHT - RAIN

On the Penasco main street, it is as seedy and unappetizing
a structure as the mind of man and neglect can devise.

EXT. PENASCO MAIN STREET - NIGHT - RAIN
Addie's jeep rounds a corner and pulls up to a stop in
front of the motel.

AT JEEP PASSENGER WINDOW

Jake looks out at the O.S. motel.

INT. ADDIE'S JEEP - NIGHT - RAIN

Jake slowly turns his head and stares straight ahead
through the windshield.

ADDIE
Want a drink?

JAKE
Yes, I think so.

ADDIE
Nearest bar that's open now is
thirty miles.
(affects an accent
south of the border)
Wan' to come an' meet my seester?

JAKE
Just one drink.

As she puts the jeep into gear and starts off:

ADDIE
Jake, why are you so proper?

EXT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RAIN

It is a substantial home. From within, we HEAR a
piano and a woman -- Addie's sister, MARYLEE --singing a bit
raucously in the Ethel Merman style. It's a '50s song by Tom
Lehrer called "The Old Dope Peddler."

MARYLEE (O.S.)
"When the shades of night
are falling, all around
the neighborhood,
you'll see the old dope peddler
doing well by doing good."

INT. ADDIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT -RAIN.

It is of wealth, with sky-high ceilings and marble floors.
It resembles Charlie Chaplin's old house in Beverly Hills.

In the foreground, Jake and Addie sit with drinks by
a roaring fireplace. In the background, Marylee sings
and plays the nine-foot Grand piano.

ADDIE
And so how do you like our
teacher housing? Some school
board we've got in Penasco.
Right? Well, Daddy robbed
banks and left it all to his
daughters, who then schooled
themselves in Switzerland,
traveled the world three times,
and then came back home to
Penasco because it's so sinful
and exciting, don't you know.
Are you surprised?

JAKE
I wonder why you teach grade school.

ADDIE
Oh, I love it. I like being there
at the beginning when their minds
and their souls are forming.
(something like
reverie as she
looks away)
So innocent and hopeful.

JAKE
But why in Penasco?

ADDIE
I don't know. I'm
just afraid.

JAKE
Afraid of what?

ADDIE
The world.

She is looking into the fire; he, at her for a moment. She turns to him.

ADDIE
I'm all bravado, Jake.

JAKE
I know.

She turns and looks into the fireplace.

ADDIE
How frail we are. All the
horrifying ways that we can die.
And then be gone into what?
The cold void. Not being,
anymore. Lonely emptiness.
Nothingness. God!
(turns to Jake)
Are you religious?

JAKE
(clarifying)
Am I a religious?

ADDIE
No, are you religious?
(returning her gaze
to the fire)
I'm not. I was born and raised
a Catholic. That's a comforting faith.
But I've lost it. When I die
I'll get it back, I suppose, just like
everybody else when they're dying.
I'll be yelling for a priest and
to make my confession to someone
who'd give me absolution in Latin.
This Clap Hands, Here Comes God
guitar Mass stuff. It drove me nuts.

JAKE
I understand.

ADDIE
Did you say you were religious?

JAKE
A religious.

ADDIE
Same as me.

JAKE
I don't think so.

Marylee has finished the song, turns to them:

MARYLEE
Here's one by Abe Burrows called
"The Secretary's Song."

ADDIE
Marylee, go to bed!

MARYLEE
How do you do that?

FULL SHOT AT MARYLEE

A highball rests on the piano wing. Her slurred voice has already announced that Marylee has had quite a few before this one. Turning back to the piano:

MARYLEE
(in an undertone)
I'm a virgin, fer chrissakes.

She hits an announcing chord, loud, then:

MARYLEE
(singing)
"You put a piece of carbon
paper under your heart,
and gave me just a copy of
your love..."

AT JAKE AND ADDIE

Marylee continues in the background, occasionally flubbing a note and starting over. Meanwhile:

ADDIE
Can I ask you something? When I met
you at the schoolhouse you looked --
well, sort of strangely at me.

JAKE
Yes.

ADDIE
Why was that?

JAKE
You remind me of someone.

Addie nods.

JAKE
A young girl. Long ago.

ADDIE
Was she special to you?

Jake nods. Marylee stops playing, gets up and heads toward Jake and Addie with her drink in hand.

ADDIE
And what happened?

JAKE
Oh, she died. She died young.

ADDIE
How young??

JAKE
Nineteen.

Marylee plops herself down on the sofa near them, spilling much of her drink as she lands.

MARYLEE

How's your ass, everybody?
Are we cozy? How's your drink,
young stranger?

JAKE

I'm fine.

MARYLEE

Well, hurry up with it. My sister
wants to get you drunk.
Where's this house you're putting
up?

JAKE

House?

MARYLEE

House. You're not a contractor?

JAKE

No, ma'am.

ADDIE

F.B.I.

MARYLEE

Same thing.

ADDIE

Aren't you planning on sleeping
soon, darlin'?

MARYLEE

No, I want to tell a joke first.

ADDIE

Oh, my God.

But Marylee's heavy lids close, and she falls sideways on
the couch, dead asleep.

AT FIREPLACE

Only embers now. Low snores O.S. from Marylee.

JAKE (O.S.)

No, I found another love.
My true love. Stronger.
A fire.

AT JAKE ADDIE

They are sitting on the floor in front of the fire. Jake turns to stare into the flames.

ADDIE
(softly)

Yes.

JAKE
It came from nowhere. "All that I should give you is all that I am," I thought. I felt. It changed the way I looked at the world. I used to love the college proms. I loved the dancing. The music. Everything. The orchids and carnations in a swirl around the floor, the rented orchestra, the sound of the punch being ladled. Then I met my love. And the next time I went to a dance, I saw it all in black and white: The whole room. Everything. It all looked insubstantial, unreal, thin and flat and drained of color, drained of life. All the dancers looked like ghosts.

After a pause:

ADDIE
And what happened?

JAKE
My love went away.

A VERY LOUD SNORE brings us to:

MARYLEE

crashed on the sofa. She rolls over and onto the carpeted floor. Still asleep, muttering into the rug:

MARYLEE
Some house. Put some stairs in it.

EXT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The moon slips past a misty cloud. The rain is gone. A million stars.

JAKE (O.S.)
That's Cygnus, the Swan.

AT ADDIE JAKE

Leaning front on a fence. Jake is pointing up at the sky.

JAKE
There's Arcturus.

ADDIE
Are the stars here boring, too?

He looks down into her eyes.

JAKE
Nothing's boring here, Addie.

ADDIE
(holding his steady
gaze)
I just wondered.

He glances over her shoulder.

JAKE
What's that light over there?

ADDIE
Where?

JAKE
(he points)
There.

AT FAR HOUSE LIGHTS - JAKE'S POV

High on a far hill, lights burn in a sprawling ranch house.

AT JAKE - ADDIE

ADDIE
That's Bob Quinn's ranch.

Addie doesn't see him turn his gaze to her, holding it there a beat or two, appraising the expression on her face, then looking back to the ranch.

POV - THE LIGHTS OF QUINN'S RANCH

INT. KITCHEN IN ADDIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Jake and Addie sit at a small table in front of another

fireplace. Logs burning. The drinks they are sipping from mugs is more likely cocoa than whiskey.

ADDIE

No, I've been married. Once. Only once. He was a beautiful boy. A musician. He played the guitar. Oh, we traveled all over together with his band. For a year. That's all.

She is affected; rubs her finger around on the rim of the mug.

JAKE

And what happened?

ADDIE

What makes me want to tell you all these things? Something about you.

She is near tears. He reaches his hand across the table and takes hers, squeezes it.

ADDIE

Oh, why do people have to die, Jake?

JAKE

I don't know.

She squeezes his hand in both of hers, holds it against her bowed forehead; collects herself; goes on:

ADDIE

He had cancer. Toward the end he was so weak that I'd have to hold him up in the shower -- he couldn't stand. And I found him on the floor once near the refrigerator. He'd tried to open up the door, but he was just too weak and he collapsed from the effort. My boy. My strong and beautiful boy. At the start he said he didn't want to take any drugs. But then he had to. And he started --

She is interrupted by piano-playing. Marylee is awake! She is playing "Girl of My Dreams." Jake turns his head to the song, listening, remembering, as:

ADDIE

Well, toward the end he was hallucinating. Or something. He seemed to see people in the room. "What happens then?" he said once. I'd just come in and he was staring straight ahead and to my left. "What happens then?"

She seems to be listening to the piano for a few beats. Then:

ADDIE

That night he said, "Life is so simple, Addie. I finally understand. It's so simple. Then he went into coma and he left us. My beautiful boy. He went away.

Marylee is now into "That Old Gang of Mine," singing along and Addie is listening again.

JAKE

Did he ever explain it?

ADDIE

(coming back; didn't hear)

I'm sorry. What was that?

JAKE

"Life is simple." Did he ever explain that?

ADDIE

(shaking head)

No.

She is staring down at the table; and now Jake lowers his gaze as well in what we might interpret as disappointment. But he regathers his reassuring manner as:

ADDIE

Do you think life goes on?
When we die? Do you, Jake?

JAKE

(a magnificent lie)

Beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The room is lightening with a soft, rosy glow of dawn. Addie

brightens, her hand giving Jake's a glad squeeze. Then she looks to the window.

ADDIE

Lord, it's sun-up. We've talked the whole night.

Marylee appears at the kitchen door with her cigarette and drink in hand.

MARYLEE

Do you want your eggs scrambled, fried or as usual, completely fucked up?

EXT. ADDIE'S HOME - DAWN

From high and far, we see Jake and Addie come out a door, and slowly proceed to a chest-high fence where they rest their arms and gaze at:

SUNRISE SHOT

The huge orange ball of the sun slipping upward to illumine God's grandeur. Breathtaking.

ADDIE (O.S.)

Oh, I like you, Jake.

JAKE (O.S.)

I like you.

AT ADDIE AND JAKE

ADDIE

Will you ever come back here?

JAKE

Got to check on those deputies' underpants, don't I?

She laughs. Jake is watching the sunrise as Addie puts an arm around his waist and leans her head against his shoulder. The CAMERA is already SLOWLY ASCENDING as:

ADDIE

Oh, Jake, you make me feel so safe and secure. Like a guardian angel. Angel Jake.

Jake stares at her leaning head for a beat, then slowly puts his arm around her shoulder while his other hand seeks the one she has on his waist. Then he turns and joins her in watching the sunrise.

The scene abruptly is out of focus, bordered by spheroid blackness. Addie and Jake come back into focus again and we realize that we are seeing them through binoculars.

Someone is watching.

EXT. CLAUDE'S GAS STATION - MORNING

ADDIE AND JAKE - ADDIE'S JEEP

Addie is behind the wheel, the engine running, as Jake hops out.

ADDIE
I'll meet you at the
chili stand, Jake.

JAKE
Okay.

AT CLAUDE

He is gassing up a car.

CLAUDE
(calling out)
Doctor Byron pulled her through,
Mister Jake! Goin' ta rodeo
today?

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF RODEO ACTION INTERCUT WITH SHOTS
OF SOME OF THE BOOTHS SET UP AROUND THE RODEO CORRAL.
INCLUDE THE QUINNS AND THE ANDERSENS. FINALLY:

EXT. RODEO BOOTH SECTION - DAY

It's all been set up at the high school grounds.
The CAMERA discovers Jake and Addie walking, seeking. Addie
is scooping chili to her mouth from a cardboard cup. She
hesitates, points off.

ADDIE
There they are.

AT COTTON CANDY - CONFECTION STAND

The Andersens are filling their children's hands and
faces.

FRONT TRACKING - JAKE AND ADDIE

En route to the Andersens they encounter Bob and Juanita
Quinn. Quinn has a mile-long hot dog and a soft drink
in hand as he stops Jake.

QUINN
Why, Mister Pepper! Glad to
see you!
(nods to Addie)
Miss Addie.

ADDIE
(friendly)

Oh, hi.

QUINN
(holding up
his hands)
'Scuse the piggin'.

ADDIE
Loved that barbecue Sunday.
Thanks again. By the way, did you
find that heifer, Bob?

QUINN
(mouth full, he
nods; then:)
She was tangled in some brush
by the river. Mister
Pepper, hope you'll stay with
us a while. Heard you play a
mighty mean game of chess. That's
hard to come by in these parts.
Come by and play some.

JAKE
I'm afraid I'm headed back.

QUINN
Well, then, the next time.

JAKE
I'll do that. Thanks again
for the lift.
(checks wristwatch)
Afraid I'm rushing.

QUINN
Understand. You come on back
now, you hear?

JAKE
I'll do that.

JUANITA
(almost an
undertone)
Good.

Juanita's smoky gaze has never left Jake.

AT CONFECTION STAND THE ANDERSENS

As Clem stoops to hand a gigantic cotton candy ball to Josie, and with a hand on her hip, a lit cigarette in the other:

AMY
You know you're helping their
bodies form fat cells.

CLEM
Them's the breaks.

As Addie, Jake enter scene, and Amy's gaze flits across Addie's face, searching for "sign":

AMY
Oh, hi, Addie! How are things?

CLEM
Oh, Jake! Hey, glad you made it.

JAKE
I just came to say good-bye.

AMY
Hit and run?

JAKE
I want to thank you again for last
night.

AMY
(bad news)
You're not thanking Addie?

Amy's and Addie's eyes meet. Addie shakes her head, "no."

JAKE
(oblivious)
If you ever need help from us, Clem,
let me know.

Amy takes Addie by the arm and walks her away from the men.

AMY
I need a word or two with Addie,
here.

JAKE
I mean it, Clem.

CLEM
Oh, I know, but nothin's happened
in Penasco since the Flood. Like
to see you back social-like.

JAKE
Thanks.

CLEM
(glancing off)
Look at Bob pack it in.

Jake follows his gaze to:

BOB AND JUANITA

Quinn attacks the hot dog with gusto.

AT JAKE CLEM

CLEM
You can tell a man's character
watchin' him eat, and I'm tellin'
ya, Bob is a goddam saint.

JAKE
But he hit on Addie.

CLEM
Many times, my son, to no avail.
Who could help it? What do you
think of her? You like her?

JAKE
Great woman.

CLEM
That's what I think.

EXT. FORK IN ROAD OUTSIDE OF PENASCO - DAY

Addie in her jeep, Jake in his car. They stop at
the junction. Addie gets out of her jeep, walks
over to Jake in his car.

ADDIE
Well, good-bye, Jake. Please
think of us here.

JAKE
Yes, I will. I will think of
you, Addie.

She leans over and plants a kiss on his cheek.

ADDIE
I'll think of you.

A beat, then Jake drives away. The CAMERA PULLS UP
AND AWAY. Addie cups her hands to her mouth, shouts
after him:

ADDIE
Come back, Shane! Addie needs you!
Come back and find out what I
wear under my jeans!

Now Addie is a tiny figure alone on the
desert road,
waving good-bye forlornly as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FBI REGIONAL HQ IN ALBUQUERQUE - DAY

Weis is busy with paperwork at his desk, hears the clumping
of boots, looks up and sees Jake coming in. Weis checks
the boots, then watches from under bushy brows as Jake
drops his report into a basket on Weis's desk.

WEIS
What'd ya think of Penasco,
Pepper?

JAKE
Nice town.

WEIS
Don't get wise with me, Pepper,
I'm warning you!

JAKE
Right, sir.

WEIS
(assessing him)
Vow of poverty, humility and chastity,
right? Well, the rest is your
business, Pepper, but here you
can drop the humility. Okay? Loosen
up a little bit. Let it out. Where's
that wit I keep hearin' about from
your buddies, every one of them a fan
of Johnny Carson and the arts. Stop

repressing! It's no good for you!
Insult me! Go ahead!

The men stare at one another.

WEIS

Go ahead!

Jake lowers his eyes. A silence. Then, a sigh from Weis and he speaks softly and resignedly.

WEIS

Fifteen years. That's a long,
long time. I guess you can't
break the habit.

JAKE

Use a pun, go to prison.

WEIS

(nodding,
unsmiling but
understanding)

Sure. You'll go just so far and
no farther.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Jake reclines on his cot, the usual scotch and cigarette in hand, the usual Cole Porter melody from the hi-fi speaker: "All Through the Night." On his little desk, under lamplight, the automatic chess player is active, softly beeping as it "thinks." Jake turns, looks at the photo on the desk. He gets up, sits at the desk, picks up the photo.

INSERT: JAKE'S HAND HOLDING FRAMED PHOTO

The girl is in her late teens. Barring the age difference, she is the mirror image of Addie!

We HEAR the CHESS MACHINE making its move.

BACK TO SCENE

Jake sets down the photo, watches the move, then contemplates his response. After a few beats he looks up thoughtfully, and, softly:

JAKE

How did he know that I play chess?

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

We are looking at a modest house on a half-acre lot. It's on the outskirts of Penasco, where empty lots turn into raw desert. It's neatly painted and the grass is mowed painfully close. Little shellacked boulders outline the driveway in which sits a ten-year-old Cadillac. From within we HEAR:

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(OVER)

... And here in Penasco it's
hard to believe we're coming
up on Christmas ...

INT. KITCHEN IN HOUSE - DAY

FULL AT PENDULUM CLOCK ON WALL

Its face bears a highly distinctive, folksy graphic.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(OVER)

... what with the temperatures
so unusually ...

FULL AT SCENE

A man in late middle age and dressed in slippers and bathrobe -- GEORGE EMMONS -- sits at a table sipping breakfast coffee while he reads the Sunday paper. His wife AMELIA -- also in her robe -- is frying bacon at the stove. They radiate gentleness of spirit. Amelia turns on an upper oven light, peers through the oven window.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(CONT'NG OVER)

... warm for this time of year.

As the Radio Voice continues, making local public service announcements:

GEORGE
(mildly)

Seems to me they said the same
thing last year, Amelia.

AMELIA
(sweet but not
an atomic scientist)

Well, they have to say something,
George. Lord knows, there's nothing
worse than to be on the radio and
all and then to stand there and

to just be quiet. Why, I think
I'd just die.

GEORGE
What's that wonderful
aroma, puss? Is that cake?

AMELIA
It's for the Bake Sale.

EXT. EMMONS HOUSE - DAY

We HEAR CHURCH BELLS in the near distance. George and Amelia come out of the house in their Sunday best. George is carrying a cake box in both hands, watching Amelia as she turns to lock the front door. A cat comes out through the door. Amelia picks her up.

AMELIA
No, Louis, you have to stay
inside. That's right. You
guard the house for us, Louis.

GEORGE
Brave kitty.

The door now locked, Amelia puts the key under the front door mat, then turns and heads for the driver's side of the Cadillac.

AMELIA
Pretty day. Not a cloud.

GEORGE
(assessing
lawn area)
Next spring let's plant a few
rose bushes.

AMELIA
George, you left the car unlocked
again.

GEORGE
I did?

AMELIA
Never mind, dear. Get in or we'll
be late.

GEORGE
(looking toward
lawn area)
I see a weed I want to pull.

AMELIA
Not now!

Addie's jeep has come along and halts in the street near the driveway. She's wearing her fishing clothes.

ADDIE
(calling out
to the Emmons)
Hi! I got a super big catch!
You want some fish?

AMELIA
Bless your heart, but not this minute,,
Addie, dear. We've got to run.

ADDIE
I'll come by later, then.

Addie is shifting gears and taking off as:

AMELIA
Oh, would you? After two
would be fine.

ADDIE
(waving)
See you then.

CU AMELIA

Looking after Addie fondly, and farewelling with a hand.

AMELIA
Bye.
INT. EMMONS CADILLAC - DAY

Amelia is backing out of the driveway. George is tuning in the radio. As the car swings into the street he glances under the dashboard.

GEORGE
What's that?

EXT. THE CAR AND THE STREET - DAY

The car moves straight down the road for twenty, thirty yards. Then it swerves violently, first one way, then another. It shears off a mailbox. It sideswipes a concrete ditchhead. It tilts into a shallow ditch running alongside an open field.

LOOKING INTO THE CAR

George and Amelia are screaming and struggling. They are being attacked by SEVEN RATTLESNAKES. The rattlesnakes' behavior is crazed.

INT. THE CAR - DAY

Nightmare. SCREAMS. The snakes are everywhere. They strike from the floor, they flow over the seats, they drop from the visors, hissing, striking, fanging. The Emmons' hands scrabble at door latches that have been broken, that swing loose, that won't work.

Outside the windows, the landscape is sunlit and serene. The CHURCH BELLS continue to ring.

EXT. LOOKING INTO BACK OF CAR - DAY

The Cadillac shudders from the convulsions within. Finally it goes still. Only the engine is running. Because of the tinted rear window we cannot see clearly into the car, but after a moment a rattlesnake flows against the glass of the rear window, like a stream of muddy water.

EXT. THE SUN - DAY

High in the sky. The SOUND of a HELICOPTER.

INT. FBI HELICOPTER - DAY

Beside the PILOT is JAKE. He is staring down at:

POV THE EMMONS' STREET - DAY

The Emmons' car. Deputies. Ambulance. Police cars, red lights flashing. Onlookers.

EXT. SKY - POLICE HELICOPTER - DAY

As it swerves sharply and descends.

EXT. THE EMMONS' STREET - DAY

CLOSE AT ADDIE

Amidst a throng of ONLOOKERS, police car lights flashing across their faces. SOUND of a rapidly approaching Police Car SIREN.

CLOSE AT YOUNG DEPUTY

His voice edged in panic, he speaks to the crowd through a bullhorn:

YOUNG DEPUTY
Stay back, please! Everybody
back!

ANGLE AT EMMONS' CAR

Nothing inside is visible. The SIREN SOUND is close upon us.

YOUNG DEPUTY (O.S.)
Don't attempt to approach. Stay back.

FEATURE CLEM

We see the police cars now, the DEPUTIES armed with shotguns, the paramedic ambulance. In the background, a POLICE CAR screeches to a halt, lights flashing. The siren goes off, Jake gets out of the car moves quickly toward Clem. Meantime, Clydene, the deputy, comes up to Clem, who never takes his gaze from the car.

CLYDENE
Jesus, Clem!

CLEM
Where's Randy?

CLYDENE
Pukin' in back of the house.

CLEM
Go call Doc Roon again. See
if he's back.
(as she leaves, Clem
lowers face into hand)
Oh, my sweet Savior! Oh, dear God!

JAKE

Clem!

CLEM

Jake! Oh, my God am I glad to see you! I never seen nothin' like this, Jake!

They turn toward O.S. SOUND of a SHOTGUN BLAST.
Jake is suddenly wild-eyed.

JAKE

No!

A FULLER ANGLE - THE SCENE

Jake is running to the Emmons car, Clem moving up deliberately behind him, where DEPUTY RANDY uses one hand to quickly slam the car door shut (it was open a crack) and then uses his shotgun to blow the head off an already injured rattlesnake beside the car. He looks tearful and distraught.

JAKE

No!

Jake whips the shotgun from the Deputy's hands.

RANDY

(reaching for the gun)

What the hell -- ?

JAKE

Pull your head up out of your butt!
We need these rattlers alive!

CLEM

(to Randy)

Why'd you do that?

RANDY

I loved those old people.

CLEM

Move away. You move away from the car and watch those people over there. They're inchin' up.

Jake tosses the shotgun forcefully at Randy, who catches it in one hand and leaves.

CLEM

I knowed George and Amelia all my life, Jake. They never had an enemy in this world. Take a look at 'em, Jake. Look inside there and see what's been done.

CLOSE AT JAKE

He nods at Clem, turns, bending to look into the car, but suddenly freezes, stunned.

INSIDE THE CAR - THE BODIES

Grotesquely swollen from the venom, they look like Halloween figures: eyes staring in terror, mouths open in the terrible smile of the dead. Suddenly a rattlesnake slithers into sight across one of the corpses.

AT JAKE

He flinches -- pure reflex; but he can't seem to move from the spot for a moment, transfixed by the enormity of the horror.

IN THE CAR

Another rattler strikes at window glass.

AT CLEM

Watching. Jake comes back into SCENE, stepping in beside him. Clem is staring O.S. at the car.

CLEM

Not an enemy in the world.
Jesus Christ, who could do such a thing?

JAKE

Were the windows open?

CLEM

What?

JAKE

The car windows: when you got here, were they open?

CLEM

No.

JAKE
The doors?

CLEM
No, not the doors.

JAKE
How many rattlers are there?

CLEM
Seven.

JAKE
Clem, you go and call the
Fish and Wildlife Office
in El Paso. Tell them to send us
a field agent, Clem. We've got
to get the other snakes out alive.

CLEM
(leaving)
God Almighty!

Jake stares at the car, transfixed.

CU SIDE ANGLE JAKE

Staring. Then he turns his head to us, staring at:

ADDIE

Returning his stare, her eyes haunted, perplexed and hurt.
The police chopper's blades are HEARD overflying the scene,
ascending, shadowing Addie's face.

INT. EMMONS HOUSE - DAY

We are back, SHOOTING toward the OPEN FRONT DOOR where
Jake stands framed just outside, looking in, and bathed
in blindingly bright, white sunlight. He is slipping
search gloves over each hand. Precisely on the CUT,
we HEAR a few annunciatory, loud notes of ORGAN MUSIC,
ecclesiastical, that ends when Jake finishes donning
the gloves by momentarily raising up his hands like a
priest at the altar. He holds this for a silent moment,
then enters, advancing slowly, searching for clues.
And now, softly at first, the haunting strains of a MALE
CHOIR singing a Gregorian chant of the "Gloria" from
the Easter Mass is heard; for this is Jake's Mass -- the
tracking down and elimination of evil!

The search is a MONTAGE that begins in the kitchen, where
Jake first surveys the room, his glances going everywhere;
then sifts through papers, letters, drawers.

Then to the LIVING ROOM.

The lone BEDROOM.

On each CUT to a new room, the MUSIC, the GREGORIAN CHANTING, shifts to another part of the Catholic Mass.

At the last, we are in a little DEN. A fireplace, a loveseat, a desk and chair. On the desk and walls, many family photos. A happy life. Jake examines a wedding photo of the Emmons, sifts through papers atop the desk, calendar notations. Then opens the desk drawer, and hesitates as he stares down at something in it. The MUSIC CUTS OUT. Jake reaches into the drawer, takes out a small, carved wooden object that he places on the desk. It is shaped like a coffin, yet it might be a jewelry box. And, indeed, Jake opens the lid and finds two pairs of cufflinks inside the box. And something else: lining the inside bottom of the box is a candid photograph -- recently taken -- of the Emmons.

EXT. EMMONS HOUSE AND CAR - EARLY EVENING

Big floodlights are lit up. VOICES ON POLICE RADIOS call across the fields. Still a crowd of onlookers, more teenagers in it now; for the latter it's not real, it's a party. A TV news van is on the scene.

And everyone is focussed on one man: BLEDSOE, the Fish and Wildlife Agent. He's cut a hole in the car door, making a conduit for the snakes to crawl into a heavy canvas trap.

We see one rattler being driven out by the heat gun wielded by another WILDLIFE AGENT working through a hole in the window on the other side. And soon the canvas bag begins to move and thrash about.

INT. CLEM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLEM AND JAKE

CLEM

Jake, it had to be an accident.

JAKE

No.

CLEM

For what reason, Jake!

He stops as Bledsoe enters, rolling down his shirtsleeves.

BLEDSON
(shaking head)
Diabolical! Jesus!

JAKE
Are they local?

BLEDSON
No way.

JAKE
I want them taken to the lab in
El Paso for a check on their
stomach contents. That might
pinpoint where they come from.

BLEDSON
Right.

CLEM
Then it's definitely murder.

BLEDSON
It's beyond that. The killer stripped
the rattles off those snakes so the
victims would have no warning.

CU JAKE

As he turns to look at Bledson, reacting. Then:

JAKE
I want them flown up right away.

BLEDSON
Well, by morning we'll --

JAKE
(his voice a lash)
Now!

CLEM
(softly)
Get him, Jake.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SHERIFF'S STATION - EARLY EVENING

Jake is exiting. Addie is across the street, perhaps
heading for Clem's office. Each spots the other and
stops. Each stands and drinks in the other. Then they
slowly cross to one another.

JAKE
I was on my way to see you.

ADDIE
I was looking for you.

JAKE
You were the last to see
the Emmons alive.

She nods, short, brief moves of her head.

ADDIE
We were friends for a long time.
Years. Lots of years. I taught
their grandchildren.

A light HONK from an approaching car. She puts a hand
on his arm, draws him toward the sidewalk.

ADDIE
Come on, let's get out of
the road.

INT. ADDIE'S KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

They are sipping tea, but standing, each resting
against a counter.

JAKE
And no grudges. No enemies.

ADDIE
No.

JAKE
Never filed any lawsuits or
anything.

ADDIE
No.

JAKE
No ex-husbands. Ex-wives.

ADDIE
No ex-anything. No reason.

Jake nods. A beat.

JAKE
No reason.

EXT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

As Jake and Addie slowly exit:

ADDIE
Well, I'll miss you.

He nods.

ADDIE
I have missed you.

JAKE
I'm so fond of you, Addie.
I think of you so often.
Every day.

ADDIE
I know. I feel you watching over
me.

A space of time as their eyes hold warmly. In Jake's we sense a deep and poignant fondness and yearning -- yet he makes no move. At last:

ADDIE
What is it, Jake? Afraid I'd go
away from you? Afraid I'd die?

JAKE
(shakes head; then:)
Bye now, Addie. Got to go.

ADDIE
Go on, Jake. God be with you.

He turns to get into his car.

JAKE
Lock your windows and doors.

ADDIE
Oh, Jake!

One hand holding open the car door, he turns. Then:

ADDIE
(with quiet vehemence)
Don't let him get away with it.

And as the CAMERA ceases its ascent:

JAKE
I won't.

INT. HERPETOLOGY LAB - DAY

Dissection tables, microscopes, spectrographs. Dead snakes. To one side is the desk of a lady herpetologist, DOCTOR CRANE. She is a chain-smoking, middle-aged, easy-going woman. Her crooked finger grips a white mug of steaming coffee. She smokes a non-filtered cigarette.

CRANE

Cute.

(sips coffee)

Yeah, he's cute. I can see what you're up against now.

JAKE

Can you pinpoint location?

CRANE

Try Rattlesnake Butte. The soil's copper-rich there, like what we found, and the place abounds in beetles with distinctive yellow markings. Your magnificent seven were full of them.

Jake mutely nods.

CRANE

Sure. Try Rattlesnake Butte. It's in the southeast corner of the state down by Faith.

JAKE

Down by what?

CRANE

That's the name of the township, Faith. The Butte's the only place you'll find the Manorus Beetle, and it turns out that your magnificent seven were full of them. Takes all kinds. Want some coffee?

JAKE

No.

CRANE

You've got your hands full, Buster.

JAKE

Why do you say that?

CRANE

Creepy killer. Gives me the shivers.
(a sip of coffee)
These snakes were shot through with
amphetamines. Injected. Who could
do that and then get them in a car?

EXT. RATTLESNAKE BUTTE - DAY

Jake rolls up in a car, stops, gets out, stares O.S. We HEAR
a wild SOUND, the HISSING and massed RATTLING of thousands
upon thousands of rattlesnakes.

WIDE ANGLE RATTLESNAKE BUTTE - JAKE'S POV

The hissing and rattling are nightmarishly, impossibly loud.

EXT. JAKE'S CAR - DAY

Jake drives. Another man in the car -- MENDOZA, a
Mexican-American highway Patrolman. The car turns off the
highway onto an unmarked secondary road.

EXT. SNAKE FARM - DAY

There's an adobe house with a screened porch, feathery
pepper trees, a large wooden shed and various wooden cages.
No signs, no notices.

Jake's car pulls into the yard, raising a cloud of dust.
Jake and Mendoza get out.

MENDOZA

I hope I steered you right,
Mr. Pepper. It's the only one
around.

JAKE

You've done fine.

MENDOZA

There she is.

IN THE DOORWAY OF THE SHED - MRS. GARCIA

Stepping into the sunlight. A small, plump woman, elderly,
wearing tight pants and a man's shirt. Glaucoma coming
on, she peers, unable to see very well. She smiles,
flashing lots of gold teeth and wraps a live rattlesnake
around her neck. She smiles, waves. She speaks only Spanish.

MRS. GARCIA
(in Spanish)
Hello, Mendoza. You come to
see me, huh? Nice boy. Who've
you brought?

MENDOZA
(Spanish)
My special friend, Mister
Pepper.

MRS. GARCIA
(canny, sly smile)
So special you hide him all
these years. What does he want?
He wants a snake? Three snakes?

MENDOZA
(Spanish)
He wants to ask you some questions.

MRS. GARCIA
Then he's lucky that he's handsome.
Questions bore me. I like snakes
and men and money. Come on in.

INT. THE SHED - DAY

Lots of cages and tanks, fans going here and there,
light and shadow. In the cages and tanks, rattlers.
Garcia and the two men sit at a rude wooden table.

MENDOZA
She says , yes, she made a sale of
seven snakes last week..

JAKE
Who'd she sell them to?

Mendoza translates. Garcia replies.

MENDOZA
Two men. They came in a pickup
truck with a Mexican license
plate.

JAKE
What kind of men?

Mendoza questions. Reply. Translation:

MENDOZA
One Mexican, one gringo.

JAKE

Tell her to describe them.

Question. Reply. Translation:

MENDOZA

One was pale and pasty, the other
was dark and handsome.

She adds something.

MENDOZA

She says, "What do you want?
I'm half blind."

She speaks.

MENDOZA

She says they said that they
wanted them for some kind of
religious ceremony.

She speaks.

MENDOZA

She says the gringo may have come
to her before, many years ago.

JAKE

How many?

Mendoza translates. She answers.

MENDOZA

Maybe ten.

She speaks.

MENDOZA

He bought only one rattlesnake
then.

She says something else.

MENDOZA

She wants to know if you're paying
her for this.

Jake nods.

JAKE

Si, si, mamacita.

Hooting with surprised delight, and pointing at Jake:

MRS. GARCIA
Mamacita!

She laughs in approval, speaks. Mendoza looks strange.

JAKE
What did she say?

MENDOZA
For an educated man like you,
a linguist, she would gladly
show her tits for a slight
consideration.

JAKE
Right.

MENDOZA
What should I tell her?

JAKE
No.

Mendoza relays it to her. Downcast, she shrugs, her mouth
turning down in disappointment.

JAKE
Ask her to try to describe the gringo.

Mendoza translates. She replies.

MENDOZA
She can't.
She speaks. Mendoza hesitates, pondering what he just heard.

JAKE
What'd she say?

MENDOZA
The one man -- the gringo -- she says
that he wanted her to guarantee that
the snakes he bought would attack and
kill a bull that weighed a thousand pounds.

She speaks.

MENDOZA
She wants to know if what she's
telling you is important because
she's tired.

Jake stares at him as if he were retarded.

JAKE

Mendoza ...

Mendoza immediately gets the message, turns to her.

MENDOZA

Si.

She speaks.

MENDOZA

She told him, yes, that was possible provided ...

She continues.

MENDOZA

... provided the snakes were injected with a drug, an amphetamine stimulant, before being put into contact with the bull.

She adds something.

MENDOZA

She showed him how to do it.

JAKE

I want her to show me.

MENDOZA

Now?

CLOSE AT SNAKE TANK

Two enormous rattlers hissing, writhing.

THE SCENE

While Jake and Mendoza watch, Mrs. Garcia takes a limber pole about twice the length of a riding crop, a leather loop attached to the end of it, and catches up the head of one of the rattlers in the loop. In her other hand she holds a syringe. She dangles the snake in the air and jabs the syringe into his belly.

CU JAKE REACTING.

He is chilled.

EXT. PENASCO COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

In the distance, a mail truck is slowly approaching.

ANOTHER ANGLE discloses that off the road is a building site. At the moment only the completed foundation of a good-sized house is apparent, while nearby building materials are stacked. A few CARPENTERS are laboring. The foundation is roofed over and a TV antenna pokes out of it.

INT. BASEMENT OF BUILDING SITE - DAY

The enormous basement's rooms are fully furnished and apparently serving at the Hoskins' living quarters while the construction is on-going. Climbing a few steps now and pushing up on a heavy trapdoor made of cement and metal. is Claude. His wife (EMMY LOU) stands at a kitchenette stove cooking. She is a a short, plump and pleasant woman.

EMMY LOU

Might check the mail, Claude.

CLAUDE

Just what I'm aimin' to do,
Emmy Lou.

EXT. THE BUILDING SITE - DAY

We are SHOOTING from the road and HEAR the mail truck approaching as Claude emerges through the trapdoor. To a carpenter:

CLAUDE

How's it goin', Roy?

CARPENTER

Still waitin' for those beams.

Walking toward the roadside mailbox:

CLAUDE

Hurry up, Roy. Christmas is
right around the corner.

The postman, FLUORNOY, chugs up toward the box. Claude waves to him.

CLAUDE

Mornin', Ed. How's the baby
with the whoopin' cough?

FLUORNOY

Better. How's the Missus?

As Claude takes the mail from Fluornoy, eyeing two magazines at the top of the stack:

CLAUDE

She'll be fine now that "Vogue" and "Cosmo" come in. Where's my "National Enquirer?" and my "Humane News?"

FLUORNOY

They're there.

CLAUDE

(he sees them)

So they are. You know, Fluornoy, you can't sing country worth a fart but your mind's a steel trap.

With a smile and a wave, as he starts away:

FLUORNOY

See ya, Claude.

Sorting through the mail, heading back to his quarters:

CLAUDE

(muttering)

Neither rain nor Claude nor dark of mind will stay this faithful etcetera etcetera.

We STAY ON FLUORNOY as he slowly proceeds down the road. After we HEAR the TRAP DOOR CLOSING, the postal car stops abruptly, doesn't move for a moment, then makes a U-turn and comes back to the mailbox, into which Fluornoy places a package he'd forgotten. Then he makes another "U" and proceeds.

The package is about the size and shape of a shoe box and is wrapped in pink ribbon.

INT. FBI REGIONAL HQ - DAY

Jake sits at a computer console, punching in requests for data, smoking, looking as if he hasn't slept. The old obsessiveness faintly shines at the back of his eyes. Weis enters.

WEIS

Jake, what's goin' on out there?

JAKE

I don't know yet.

WEIS

Well, don't make a career of it.

FULL AT COMPUTER DISPLAY SCREEN

It is flashing: "DATA NOT FOUND" again and again.

EXT. JAKE'S TRAILER COURT - NIGHT

The other trailers are decorated with Christmas lights, one of them with flashers. Jake's trailer is dark. On the ground there is snow. In the air, sleet and a wintry wind.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

The cigarette, the scotch, the music: a bit of the end of "You're the Top," sliding into "Dancing in the Dark." The chess machine is active. Jake is standing, pours himself more scotch, deep in thought. A SOUND from the chess machine tells him it is making its move. He turns his head to watch it. When the move is completed, Jake moves over to the machine, leans over it, examining the position. Then his glance comes up, as he broods:

JAKE

Seven. Why seven?

CLOSE AT MUSIC. SOURCE

The melody swells, loud. And on the music we:

CUT TO:

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Faintly heard, but near. Thin snow blows across muddy ground. The lights of Penasco town shine faintly in the distance. We are:

EXT. CLAUDE'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

We are much closer to Christmas, for the frame of a house is now erected above the foundation. There has been progress. Nearby, piles of building material are covered by plastic sheeting. Parked near is a station wagon and a camper. The camper has Oklahoma plates.

INT. CLAUDE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The CAMERA is at a low angle. The Christmas music is coming from the big color-TV set. A Christmas tree, wrapped gifts piled up below it. A big, expensive kerosene heater is blazing away. Claude sits on a sofa with BOO, his son-in-law from Oklahoma. They are drinking eggnog, watching the Christmas

special on TV with half an eye. Near them, in the kitchenette, are Emmy Lou and Boo's wife, LORNA. There are roasted wild ducks, all the trimmings. Emmy Lou takes biscuits from the oven.

EMMY LOU

Oh, my gosh, they look dry. Think
I kept them in a little bit too long.

LORNA

They look perfect, "Mommer."
(takes a pick
at the stuffing)
Hmmm. That's delicious. Best ever.

CLAUDE

No, this will all be a great
big recreation room and bar
and humongous fireplace. I'm
gonna put me a moosehead over it.

BOO

Elegant.

CLAUDE

(eyeing TV screen)
Christmas carols. Love 'em.

BOO

Me too.

CLAUDE

(turning to him)
Ya ought to try to come visit
more often. Good for Lorna.
Think she misses us a bit.

BOO

Yes, she does. It's just my
doggoned business, Claude.

CLAUDE

Sure understand.

The women carry the final platters of food to the table.

EMMY LOU

Eats, boys!

BOO

Yay team!

CLAUDE

Never mind that college stuff.
You're dealin' with a self-made
man, another horrible example
of unskilled labor.

EMMY LOU

(good-humoredly)

Don't you put yourself down
like that, Claude. You've made a
wonderful life for us all.

LORNA

Amen.

BOO

God bless our "Daddy Claude."

The CAMERA discovers something flowing down the wall behind
the tree. At first it could be perceived as a snake dropping
from a ventilation hole at the top of the wall. But it isn't;
it's a thick stream of clear liquid.

LORNA

What's that smell in here?

BOO

I can't smell anything.

LORNA

Of course ya can't. You're lit
up like the tree.

EMMY LOU

(wrinkling
her nose)

Oh, I do smell something.

CLAUDE

Me too.

LORNA

Why, it's in the rug. Look, the
rug is all soaked.

They are bending to the spot.

BOO

That's kerosene.

EMMY LOU

Where are on earth could that
have come from?

CLAUDE
Beats the thunder out of me.

EMMY LOU
Oh, dear, Lord, that's going
to ruin our dinner.

CLAUDE
(pointing)
There it is. It come through
that shaft.
(moving toward
it)
Doggone that Roy, I told him --

BOOM!

AN EXPLOSION OF FLAME!

The kerosene has been touched off at the air vent. FIRE flies
down the wall and the floor begins to blaze like a burning
lake. Claude moves quickly for the stairs. Boo follows.

CLAUDE
God Almighty, get the trap door
open! Get it open!

EMMY LOU

Looking at herself. Her clothes are burning.

EMMY LOU
Oh Lord, I'm on fire!

AT THE STAIRS TO TRAPDOOR

EMMY LOU (O.S.)
(shrieking)
I'm on fire!

Claude and Boo are trying to push open the trapdoor, but it
doesn't budge. Smoke and flame billow behind them. Boo turns
an agonized, fearful look of concern to:

LORNA

as she pulls up a rug to smother the flames on Emmy Lou. And
the floor blazes up from below it. She too catches fire.
Screams.

EXT. TRAPDOOR - NIGHT

It is piled high with cement blocks.

IN. CLAUDE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

CLAUDE AND BOO

Screaming, pounding on the trap door.

EMMY LOU AND LORNA

They are human torches.

From the soul-searing, ear-splitting shrieks we go to the quiet atmosphere of:

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - DAWN

CLOSE AT THE CHESS MACHINE

And a quiet whirring SOUND as it makes a move below Jake.
Soft Cole Porter b.g.

The PHONE RINGS, jarring us. Jake grabs it.

JAKE
(into phone)

Hello?

EXT. WIDE SHOT AREA BY CLAUDE'S RESIDENCE - MORNING

In the distance, almost lost in this vast landscape, Jake's car is coming toward us.

INT. JAKE'S CAR - DAWN

Jake squinting to see better through the windshield;
dismayed at what he is seeing.

POV MOVING SHOT THROUGH CAR WINDSHIELD

Black smoke curling up in the distance.

AT CLEM CLAUDE'S MAILBOX

Clem holds a shoebox and the paper it came wrapped in, and is staring O.S toward the SOUND of Jake's car as it approaches, stops. The black smoke emanates from the burned out ruin of Claude's house, the basement, the lumber supplies. One fire truck is still there, and one FIREMAN. Clem's deputies are searching the rubble.

Clem looks grim. We HEAR Jake's car door OPEN, then CLOSE.

A FULLER ANGLE

As Jake approaches Clem, stops, holding his gaze. Jake is wearing gloves.

CLEM
Thanks for comin'.

Jake's glance drops to the shoebox.

CLEM
Found this in the mailbox.
(handing to Jake)
There weren't nothin' else
exceptin' ashes.

From the shoebox Jake withdraws another carved balsa-wood coffin. He opens the lid; stares; then reaches into it and withdraws a photograph.

INSERT PHOTOGRAPH IN JAKE'S HAND

A recent, candid photo of Claude and Emmy Lou inspecting construction of their house.

CLEM JAKE

Jake still examines the photo.

CLEM
Had to have been taken a couple
weeks ago. That's how far they
were then with construction.

Jake nods, turning the photo over. Blank. He replaces the photo in the coffin.

CLEM
What do you make of it, Jake?

JAKE
reaching for the
wrapping paper)
It came in this?

CLEM
Yes, it did.

JAKE
Local postmark.

CLEM
The killer's among us.

Jake stares at the embers of the Hoskins residence.

JAKE
I liked that old man.

INT. DEN IN EMMONS HOUSE - DAY

While Clem watches, Jake slides open the desk drawer, removes the Emmons coffin from it and lays it on top of the desk. Jake is wearing his clear plastic gloves.

JAKE
(quietly)
Give me the box.

Clem hands Jake the shoebox. Jake places it on the desk. Then he sits down at the desk, withdraws the other coffin from the shoebox and places it beside the Hoskins coffin.

JAKE
Identical.

Clem nods.

CLEM
Good whittlin'.

Jake glances at him for a moment, then removes the photos, studies the inside bottoms of the coffins. At last:

JAKE
They're numbered.

CLEM
Where?

JAKE
In the bottoms.

Clem is now leaning over, stares where Jake points.

JAKE
There. And there.
(points to the
Emmons coffin)
Two.
(points to Claude's
coffin)
Three.

CLEM
Sure enough.

JAKE
Is there a "one?"

Then Jake turns to look at Clem. Clem continues staring at the coffins as:

CLEM
There may be.

INT. CLEM'S JEEP - DAY

Clem and Jake driving into town.

CLEM
Right around Thanksgiving time,
Jake. I never paid it much
mind, but Missus Vela, though,
she always took it pretty
darned serious. She said the
Doc was murdered.

JAKE
Was he?

CLEM
(with a shake of
the head)
Heart attack.

JAKE
Why would she think that he was
murdered?

CLEM
The coffin, mainly, and then somethin'
about some drug. Ya know, Jimmy was
a doctor. Victoria swore he was killed
by some injection.

JAKE
And what did the autopsy show?

CLEM
We never did one.

Jake turns away in disbelief and mild disgust.

CLEM
Jake, old Doc Roon is a drunk,
for one thing, and couldn't be
found for all that week. For
another ... Well, Victoria's a
drug addict, Jake. Morphine.
She tends to dream up plots and
stories.
(nodding ahead)
There's the house.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

It is a house that would make Charles Addams weep with envy.

Clem parks the jeep, they get out. As they head for door to the house:

CLEM

You know it's goddam Christmas mornin'.

JAKE

Go on home to your family, Clem.

Clem shakes his head and pushes doorbell.

CLEM

Don't be surprised by nothin'.

JAKE

Surprised?

The massive front door creaks open slowly with the answer: a cadaverous houseman in seventeenth century livery, periwig, white makeup and rouge.

CLEM

Could we talk to Mrs. Vela, please, Loomis? It's important.

INT. VELA HOUSE - DAY

A lovely woman with skin as smooth and pale as pearls, VICTORIA VELA lies abed amid lace-covered pillows in a room that is furnished and decorated in grand Victorian style. She seems pleasant and calm, as if discussing fond memories, but her stare is too shining and her pupils are dilated. Clem leans against a wall while Mrs. Vela addresses Jake, who is seated in a chair by her bedside facing Clem. Loomis is present, silently standing at Vela's disposition.

VELA

His enemies were numberless as
the stars, Mister Pepper, as
uncounted as the spites in men's
hearts. Shall I recite their names?

JAKE

No, that really won't be necessary,
ma'am.

VELA

You remind me so of James, Mister
Pepper. You resemble him quite markedly.
It's striking.

JAKE

Is that so, ma'am?

Jake's glance catches Clem shaking his head deliberately and emphatically. Loomis, too, checks Jake's face and registers consternation. There is evidently no resemblance whatsoever.

VELA

Yes, it truly is remarkable.

JAKE

What makes you think he was
murdered?

VELA

Did you know he was a doctor?
Yes, I'm sure you do. James always
used to talk about -- . Oh, dear,
it's so hard to say this. I've never
told anyone. But you resemble my
James so strongly. Perhaps it's a sign
James approves of my telling you.

Loomis has moved closer to Jake, craning his neck
and squinting at him for some sign of resemblance.

VELA

I am the only witness to his
death. It was here in this room.

VELA

I am the only witness to his death. It was here in this room.

(she indicates
part of the room)

Over there. He came in with a glass of brandy in his hand, sipped it down, and in minutes he was dead. Yes, his heart stopped but what made it stop?

Jake glances at Clem.

VELA

Chironex fleckeri, gentlemen.

JAKE

Ma'am?

VELA

The sea anemone. Its venom is the deadliest in the world. A few drops of it will kill without trace within minutes. It's the perfect instrument of murder. It immediately paralyzes the vocal cords, and then the respiratory system and the victim dies slowly of suffocation. It's an utterly horrifying death.

(with a weary rolling
of the eyes)

James spoke of it constantly, day after day.

JAKE

Why was that, ma'am?

VELA

He was planning to kill someone that way.

JAKE

Who?

VELA

Anyone. James was not an easygoing man.

Jake lowers his head. This is not encouraging.

JAKE

I see.

CLEM

This sure is kind of you, Miss Vicky. I mean, seein' what the day is.

VELA

Is it some special day, Loomis?

LOOMIS

Christmas, mum.

VELA

Someone should have told me.

JAKE

How did your husband react to the coffin?

VELA

James thought very little of it, really. So did I; though when I opened it and saw his picture there, I felt a shadow had fallen.

JAKE

May I see it, please?

VELA

Why, yes, dear, you may have it.
(reaching into
nightstand drawer)
It's right here. I keep it by me.
Poor, dear James.

JAKE

I'm awfully sorry, for your loss, ma'am.

VELA

That's all right. These things happen. Not a very good picture of James. He was usually very photogenic. He liked posing in the nude with my chest X-rays. It reminded him strongly of his favorite novel by Thomas Mann.

Jake has taken the coffin from her, opened it and taken out a photo.

INSERT: JAKE'S HAND - PHOTO OF JAMES VELA

A sallow, hunchbacked man, his face is as unlike Jake's as one could imagine.

BACK TO SCENE

Jake looks at bottom of coffin, then up at Clem.

CU JAKE

He nods.

JAKE

Number one.

VELA (O.S.)
(a caring tone)

Dear boy.

Jake turns to the voice.

CLOSE AT VELA

Though she is drugged, an undercurrent of earnestness and reality color her sad tone.

VELA

Don't let the morphine murder
my words. Take care. Take care.
(closing her eyes)
Take special care.

ECU JAKE

staring at her as now a shadow falls over him, too.

INT. CLEM'S OFFICE - DAY

JAKE CLEM

On Clem's desk, three coffins in a plastic bag.

JAKE

Come on, Clem -- you've been
the sheriff here for fourteen
years! You've grown up here!
You've lived here all your
life! Now what's the connection?
What's common to these murder
victims? There's a link,
a connection! What is it?

CLEM
(weary)
I don't know, Jake.

JAKE
You must know!

CLEM
(checking his
watch, then moving
to put on his
winter jacket)
Look, you want to keep jawin' at
this, I'm with ya, but we're doin'
it at my place. I got kids waitin'
up on me ta open their presents

JAKE
(nodding)
Sure.

Seeing Jake just sitting:

CLEM
Come on then, let's go!

JAKE
(standing, picks
up bag of coffins)
I want to take these to our crime
lab. That okay?

CLEM
They're closed! It's Christmas Day!

JAKE
No, they're open, Clem. Death doesn't
take any holidays.

CLEM
Death needs a drink, goddamit! It's the
little baby Jesus's birthday!

INT. ANDERSENS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

A SERIES of INDIVIDUAL CLOSE SHOTS of children beaming,
opening gifts. The SOUND of CHRISTMAS CAROLS from a
stereo console. INDIVIDUAL SHOTS of CLEM, AMY. A SHOT
of VIOLET CHATTING WITH MARYLEE.

ADDIE JOSIE

Josie gives Addie a gift box wrapped in plain brown paper and tied in pink ribbon. It bears stamps, postal markings and is the size and shape of a shoebox.

JOSIE
Could you please untie this
for me?

ADDIE
Sure, honey.

JOSIE
Only the ribbon part.

Starting to work at the package's bindings, Addie turns for a look at:

POV JAKE

Sitting alone on a small couch, thinking, elsewhere; a dark, brooding presence. Clem plops down heavily beside him. He has two wrapped gifts in hand. He tosses on onto Jake's lap.

CLEM
That's for you, good buddy.
Merry Christmas.

JAKE
(looking at
it; quietly)
You shouldn't have done that,
Clem.

Clem is unwrapping the package on his lap as:

CLEM
It ain't much. Go on, open it.

JAKE
(after a shake of
his head)
Later on. Are you thinking, Clem?

CLEM
Yeah, Jake, I'm thinkin'. I don't
know. I just --

He breaks off as he sees something O.S. that startles him, and:

CLEM

Josie!

POV QUICK ZOOM TO CU JOSIE

as she removes the pink ribbon-tied wrapping from the shoebox, lifts the lid. Something inside resembles a coffin.

CU CLEM

CLEM

(a hoarse whisper)

Jesus!

AT JOSIE ADDIE

Addie is staring toward Clem quizzically. Josie, smiling, is holding up the object, opening the lid.

JOSIE

It's a music box!

Indeed, we HEAR its tinkling song.

AT JAKE CLEM

Clem lowers his head, resting brow against his fingers, relieved.

AT JOSIE

JOSIE

Addie gave it to me.

AT ADDIE

smiling at Josie. Then she turns to look at Clem and Jake.

ADDIE

What was that about?

AT CLEM JAKE

Clem is still recovering. Jake shakes his head for Addie's benefit; but you can see his wheels turning with a new idea.

AT ADDIE

ADDIE

(to herself)

Secrets.

AT JAKE CLEM

Jake is still staring at Addie in a measuring, calculating way. Clem is unwrapping the gift on his lap. It is about the size of a hatbox, and is swathed in multi-colored Christmas wrapping paper and ribbon.

CLEM

Jake, those three people were so unconnected you'd need twenty quarts of Crazy Glue to tie 'em all together.

JAKE

Keep thinking, Clem. There must be some connection. Keep thinking! There may be more killings!

CLEM

I get your drift.

Jake knocks back a scotch.

JAKE

I've got to go.

CLEM

Damn it all, there's dinner, Jake.

JAKE

I'm not hungry.

CLEM

And not too polite. You can damn open that present Addie gave ya!

JAKE

Addie gave me.

CLEM

Well, she said not to tell ya.

Jake looks over at:

ADDIE

ADDIE

(to another of
Clem's children)

Open another one.

She then smiles across the room at:

JAKE

The ghost of a fond smile as he looks at Addie,
unwraps the little gift.

AT CHRISTMAS TREE BILLY

He's just opened a gift, holds it, thrilled.

BILLY

It's a "Gobot Master!"
I got it! I got it!

Her showing it around, then holds up toward Clem.

BILLY

Dad, I got it!

AT JAKE CLEM

Jake is reading the label on a little can of medication.

JAKE

(reading)

"Mennen's Foot-Ease. Instant
Relief."

Clem is absently removing lid from gift box and reaching
in a hand to withdraw gift from a mass of excelsior.

BILLY (O.S.)

I got my "Gobot Master!"

CLEM

Let me see it.

Jake has just turned his head to stare at Clem's gift box,
and Clem's hand is fumbling in the box, as Billy bursts
into the FRAME with the toy.

BILLY

Look!

Clem's hand withdraws the gift. He's looking at Billy and
the Gobot Master. He doesn't see the handcarved coffin
in his hand. Jake's face is suddenly ashen.

BILLY

Dad, it changes into all different
shapes!

CU JAKE

Numbly staring.

CLEM (O.S.)
Well, let me see one.

BILLY (O.S.)
Okay. See, right now it's a
spaceman, Dad ...

CU CLEM

BILLY (O.S.)
Now watch me make it be a dinosaur.

CLEM
Right, son. Right.

Billy's voice continues over, detailing the transformation in the toy. Clem turns to Jake with a nod and a smile.

CU JAKE

Staring at the coffin, doom in his expression.

CU CLEM

His smile turns to puzzlement. He drops his gaze to follow Jake's; reacts.

CLEM
(softly)
Oh, my sweet Jesus!

CLOSE AT ADDIE

staring over, wondering what's up.

CLOSE AT AMY

doing the same.

CLOSE AT ONE OF THE CHILDREN

Happy, opening a gift. Then, from the LOUD CHRISTMAS MUSIC, go to the quiet and tension of:

INT.. CLEM'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Clem seems dazed. He's staring at a small photo in his hand.

JAKE
Take extra precautions, Clem.

CLEM
I'll be okay.

JAKE
I'll be back. I'll get these coffins
examined by the lab and I'll come
right back.

CLEM
Must of took this recent.

INSERT: CLEM'S HAND HOLDING PHOTO.

It is indeed recent: Clem behind the wheel of the eccentric
jeep. Seems to be a candid shot.

CLEM (O.S.)
Snow.

BACK TO SCENE

Jake lifts the photo from Clem's fingers with a tweezers,
places it into a clear plastic sheathing.

JAKE
(gently)
Wish you hadn't touched it.

CLEM
I'm gonna be next, Jake. God
as my witness, I don't know why.
I never harmed no one. Never.
But I'm next.

JAKE
I'll come right right back.

Clem begins to cry.

CLEM
Oh, Jesus, I don't want to die!

Jake stares, then comes to Clem, embraces him,
comforting, pressing Clem's face to his chest.

JAKE
You won't, Clem. You won't die.

Clem cries it out. When it's over:

CLEM

For God's sakes, don't say nothin'
to Amy.

JAKE

No. And let's not broadcast
what we know about these coffins.
Now one more time, Clem -- what's
the connection? Can you remember
the connection now, Clem? Can
you think of it?

CLEM

You.

JAKE

What?

CLEM

Never had a murder here till
you came to town.

CU JAKE

As he realizes with a start that this is true.

INT. FBI CRIME LAB - DAY

We are in a Computer Room. Through an all-glass wall we see TECHNICIANS, laboratory instruments: spectrosopes etc. Jake is in a chair, his overcoat still on, resting his head in crossed arms on a work table. He may be asleep. He looks as if he's been there for a very long time. The SOUND of the computers clicking and chattering. Through the glass we see someone in white lab pants and jacket approaching: BALES. He enters the computer room, sits down on bench beside Jake.

BALES

Pepper.

No response. Bales touches Jake's shoulder, and Jake is instantly up with a start.

BALES

Well, we haven't got much, Jake.
No prints or hairs, no fibres.
As you might expect, the wood matches
in all the coffins and there are
characteristic tool marks.

JAKE

Right.

BALES

The same camera took all the pictures, and we're sure the same person developed them, too.

JAKE

What kind of camera?

BALES

A thirty-five millimeter single lens reflex.

JAKE

That narrows it down to a million.

EXT. OUTER HALLWAY CRIME LAB - DAY

Jake is walking away from us toward the elevator. Then he stops. A beat. He turns around and comes back. He opens door, enters lab.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Bales is studying some reports. He looks up, sees Jake approaching. Jake enters.

JAKE

Could you run down a name for me?
See what we've got on it?

BALES

(picks up
pen, prepares to
note it down)

Go.

JAKE

The name's Robert Veecham Quinn.
(spelling)
That's V-e-e-c-h-a-m. Seven letters.

BALES

Let's see what we've got.

JAKE

I'll wait.

CLOSE AT COMPUTERS

whirring, churning.

AT BALES

scrutinizing a computer print-out. Through the glass wall, we see Jake in the other room pouring himself a cup of black coffee. Then he comes back into the computer room.

BALES

It's all ready for you, Jake.

JAKE

Good enough.

Bales is cutting it up into page form.

BALES

Looks like your boy's a model citizen.

JAKE

He is.

BALES

Then what's this exercise for?

JAKE

Paranoia.

The TELEPHONE INTERCOM BUZZES. Bales picks up phone.

BALES

(into phone)

Bales.

He listens briefly, then hands the phone to Jake.

BALES

It's for you.

Jake takes the phone.

JAKE

(into phone)

This is Pepper.

INT. CLEM'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Amy is puttering, bacon is frying, Violet is buttering toast -- and eating it. Clem stands at wall phone.

CLEM
Jake, it's Clem. Look, I may have
remembered somethin'. I don't know.
It could be somethin', could be not. More
likely not, it was so darned long ago.

INT. FBI COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

JAKE
(into phone)
What is it?

We HEAR clearly from the other end:

CLEM'S VOICE
(phone filter)
The river.

INT. CLEM'S KITCHEN - CLEM ON PHONE - DAY

JAKE'S VOICE
(phone filter)
What was that?

Clem notes the curious, troubled stare from Amy.

CLEM
(into phone)
Jake, it's all kind of twisty and
fuzzy and stuff. I can't explain it
now, I'm headin' off ta try my new
canoe.

INT. FBI COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

CLEM'S VOICE
(phone filter)
Can you come into town?

JAKE
(into phone)
Right away.

CLEM'S VOICE
Let's try to meet at three o'clock
in the "Courier" office. That's our
newspaper, Jake.

INT. CLEM'S KITCHEN - DAY

CLEM
(on phone)
I want to show you all the
articles.

JAKE'S VOICE
(phone filter)
What articles?

INT. FBI COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

CLEM'S VOICE
Jake, I gotta run.

JAKE
Clem, be careful.

CLEM'S VOICE
(PHONE FILTER)
Don't worry.

EXT. RIVER OUTSIDE OF PENASCO - DAY

For the moment a happy man, Clem paddles his new canoe. In the canoe with him are Josie and Clem's shotgun.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Clem and Josie are rolling along the highway in Clem's jeep. On the RADIO, there is COUNTRY MUSIC. The jeep is pulling a trailer that carries the canoe.

CLEM
Honey, wasn't that fun?

JOSIE
When can we do it again?

CLEM
Next weekend, precious.

JOSIE
Promise?

EXT. RANCH ROAD - DAY

We see the jeep and trailer come around the bend and disappear into the long alley of trees.

EXT. THE ALLEY - DAY

Dappling sunlight flows like creek water over Clem and the little girl as the jeep rolls along the alley.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The alley stretches ahead. The light is tricky.

ON CLEM'S FACE

He is smiling, pleased with the outing and the day, his danger forgotten. Josie is nestled against him. He has an arm around her.

Then Clem's eyes focus in terror.

ACROSS THE ROAD AHEAD - A STEEL WIRE

Taut, silvery. Right there.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A terrible TWANGING SOUND. Something round and heavy flies through a screen of brush.

FRONT MOVING SHOT THE JEEP

Josie is shrieking in fear at something just ahead. Clem is headless, gushing blood.

AHEAD, A TREE

The jeep crashes into it with a roar. Josie SCREAMING.

The jeep rolling over and over, then exploding into flame. The CAR HORN STUCK.

EXT. AMBULANCE - ROAD OFF CRASH SITE - EVENING

It is quiet now, except for Amy's sobs, which persist throughout the scene. Addie holds her closely, mutely comforting her. Jake watches, stricken, as first Clem's canvas-covered body, then Josie's little stretcher, also covered with canvas, are slipped into the back of the ambulance by the TWO PARAMEDICS.

AMY
(agonized cry)

Oh, my God!

At this, Jake turns to look at her: pained, frustrated, angry.

EXT. "COURIER" OFFICE - DUSK

It is off the main street in Penasco. Through the front glass facade we see presses running in the back, activity: TYPESETTERS, COMPOSITORS, REPORTERS. In the foreground, in the section where the writing and composing is done, Jake and the Courier EDITOR are talking. There is a great urgency in Jake's manner, and his hands have taken to shaking again. The Editor seems dazed, almost out of it.

INT. "COURIER" OFFICE - DUSK

FEATURE JAKE AND EDITOR

EDITOR

(shaking head)

No, I've no idea, Mister Pepper.
Clem hadn't been by here in months.
I've no idea.

JAKE

Doctor Vela -- the Emmons -- the
Hoskins -- Clem: can you think of
some connection among them, some
thing or some event that made the
paper?

EDITOR

(head down; shaking
it, his voice
grown weaker)

No, I can't.

JAKE

Can I look for myself, sir?

The Editor now mutely nods, putting fingers to his moistening eyes. He is slowly settling down -- hands feeling for its arms -- into a desk chair.

JAKE

You've got a subject index?

The Editor nods, then buries his face in a propped hand, weeping, as the CAMERA settles in CLOSE on him.

CU JAKE

Looking at the Editor.

EXT. LS "COURIER" OFFICE - NIGHT

We are SHOOTING from across the street. A wintry wind kicks up snow from the streets, whistling down the night. We can see Jake at a table, poring over bound collections of "The Courier." He is alone.

INT. "COURIER" OFFICE - NIGHT

We have Jake in the foreground, and are SHOOTING toward the window. We HEAR a vehicle coming up the street, see its lights as it parks in front of the newspaper office. It is Addie's jeep. Jake, feverishly searching, is oblivious. Addie gets out of the jeep, comes to the glass front. She taps on it with her jeep keys. Jake is oblivious. She taps again, louder. He looks, gets up, goes to the door, lets her in, but immediately returns to his newspapers. Addie glances at wall clock. It's almost four a.m. She walks quietly to the table, sits there watching Jake. As he scans, turning pages:

JAKE

Addie ...

ADDIE

Yes, Jake.

JAKE

What connection might there be between Clem, the Emmons, the Hoskins and Doctor Vela that might have something to do with a river?

ADDIE

Is that what you're looking for?

JAKE

Yes.

ADDIE

I don't know. Nothing really.

Jake stops his search, looks up at her sharply.

ADDIE

I mean, nothing of any consequence. It's trivial.

Jake keeps staring at her silently. At last:

ADDIE

Well, Clem and Claude and Jimmy Vela were all on the river committee.

JAKE

What's that?

ADDIE

I was on it.

Jake reaches for and lights a cigarette. He doesn't want Addie to be alarmed, but we can see his response: his hands shake more than ever.

JAKE

What is it?

ADDIE

Oh, it's history, Jake. It was years ago.

JAKE

What river?

ADDIE

Blue River. It belongs to Bob.

JAKE

Bob who?

ADDIE

Bob Quinn. But it caused a little problem for us once. We'd had two droughts in a row and the ranchers asked Bob to divert the old Blue a little bit so it would help with irrigation at their end. Bob said no, so then the town council formed this committee and we voted and diverted. That's all. Bob didn't even make an appearance. Clem, Claude and Jimmy were on the committee.

JAKE

When did all of this happen?

ADDIE

Right after Bob's father died, six or seven years ago, I think. It was nothing.

JAKE

And how has the diversion affected
Blue River?

ADDIE

It hasn't affected it at all. The
diversion just siphoned off a trickle.

JAKE

Then why did Quinn oppose it?

ADDIE

(shrugging)

I don't know. That's just Bob.

JAKE

You know him well?

ADDIE

All my life.

JAKE

Who else was on that committee?

ADDIE

Albie Mayer and Mary Ellen Craver.

JAKE

They still live here?

ADDIE

They both died of cancer.

JAKE

But neither of the Emmons were on
the committee.

ADDIE

No, Jake. And the river thing was
just a big nothing.

Jake pushes a notepad and pencil to her.

JAKE

Write down their names, please,
the ones who died of cancer.

She nods, picks up the pencil, writes. Jake scrutinizes
her intensely. She glances up and catches the look.

JAKE

Look after Amy.

EXT. STARLITE MOTEL - STREET - DAWN

Down the street, at the end of the horizon, the ball of the sun grips the edge of the world.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Hanging in the window, a neon wreath with "Merry Christmas" running across it. It blinks on and off intermittently. Jake has made camp here. He sits at a little writing table covered with various reports, but is focussed now on a legal-sized lined yellow writing tablet on which he has written a vertical column of names in block letters:

JAMES EDWARD VELA
GEORGE ANDREW EMMONS
MARY ELLEN CRAVER
CLEM ANDERSEN
CLAUDE AVERY HOSKINS
ALBIE MAYER
ADDIE ANN MASON

He has arranged the names in the column so that one can draw -- as he now does -- two vertical straight lines connecting them and boxing in the initial letter of either the first, middle or last names on the list. Thus arranged, the letters in the boxed column spell:

VEECHAM

Jake stares at it. It is Quinn's middle name.

JAKE
(a murmur)

"Honest Iago."

He lights a cigarette, pours a scotch, takes a sip. Then calmly, despite the hour, he looks up a number in the telephone directory, picks up the phone, dials a number.

Someone answers immediately:

QUINN'S VOICE
(phone filter)

Good morning, Jake.

Jake registers zero surprise that Quinn knows who is calling. Still calmly:

JAKE
I think I'd like that game of chess
now, Mister Quinn.

EXT. ROAD ALONG THE RIVER - MORNING

Jake's car is at the approaches to the Quinn ranch. Rolling hills, stands of trees. He comes to the entrance, a simple swing-gate, left open. A sign, not large, but imposing, with well-cut letters, reads:

B.Q. RANCH
R. V. QUINN, PROPRIETOR

Above the sign, Quinn's crest: a pair of crossed rattlesnake heads. Jake assesses it for a moment, then pulls in through the gate. Beyond, the road seems to go on forever. There are antelope, deer, herds of cattle and timberland, silhouettes of big sheds, haybarns and corrals. There is a string of bungalows for ranch hands. A Mexican woman stands in a yard, hanging out laundry.

Now the main house, a white clapboard two-storied structure with covered veranda. Past it runs the river, beautiful and glistening in the sun, the sound of its rush blending with the bubbly cascading of nearby waterfalls. Outside the house, QUINN'S CHILDREN -- none younger than nine or ten -- are at play, watched by a Mexican NANNY. One ten-year-old, a beautiful boy with bouncing yellow hair, rides a horse bareback.

Jake gets out of the car. The boy waves. Surveying the house, Jake goes to the door. Before he need knock, it is opened by Juanita. What she wears seems designed to stimulate lust. She is sultry-eyed and warmly seductive. She extends her hand to Jake.

JUANITA

The great detective. And so we meet again. Please come in, Mister Pepper.

JAKE

Thank you, ma'am.

JUANITA

Bob is showering. He looked for lost cattle this morning. Never mind. I'll entertain you. Your coat. May I call you Jake?

Removing his coat and handing it to her, she hanging it on a coattree:

JAKE

Yes, of course.

JUANITA

And brave. You do not fear it
will give Bob a big advantage?
That is confidence. He plays
very well, you know, though I suspect
not as well as you.

Jake has been assessing the room and its contents.
There are a multitude of carved wooden sculpts, and
many framed, very large blowups of photographs: Juanita,
the children and the river are the predominant subjects.

JUANITA

Let me guess: straight whiskey.

JAKE

Straight scotch.

JUANITA

(shrugging,
pouring it)

I was correct.

JAKE

In essence.

She sees Jake staring at a photo of the river.

JUANITA

Ah, you like that?

JAKE

Yes.

JUANITA

Bob took all of these photos.
Don't you think his eye is good?

JAKE

Yes.

JUANITA

It is. It's very sensitive to
symmetries in nature. He
reveres unbroken beauty.
(a touch of
bitterness)

Nothing else.

JAKE

Perfect light balance.

JUANITA
(indicating
herself with a
hand gesture)

Juanita. Come.

They are standing in the foyer, a wide hall. The house is fair-sized, grown out of an old adobe house. Good materials, long-lasting construction and deep colors. A man designed it.

As Jake follows Juanita:

JUANITA
Can I offer you some breakfast?
Coffee? A drink? It's still the
holidays. What do you think?

Jake has stopped to stare at a portrait of a man, a westerner, who strongly resembles -- but is not -- Bob Quinn. The firm set of his chin and slight downward turn to his lips suggest that he might, as a father, have been a stern disciplinarian, and as a human being, a bit tight-fisted and miserly.

JUANITA
Bob's father. A very strong man.
Very strict; very hard on Bob.
He went riding alone one day
down by the river and was killed
by a rattlesnake.

JAKE
I know.

Juanita eyes him with slightly raised eyebrows.

JUANITA
You know a lot, Jake.

JAKE
I think I'd like that drink.

JUANITA
(pleased)
Ahhh. Muy hombre.

She leads him down steps into the sunken living room. Cathedral ceiling. Massive beams. Small windows. The room is dark and moodily lit by lamps and a fire in the enormous stone fireplace. She heads for a bar setup.

JUANITA

Yes. He develops them himself.

(pouring tequila)

I will join you. A tequila sunrise.

It's appropriate. Do you ever drink
tequila, Jake?

Totally distracted, tense awaiting Quinn's arrival, Jake
merely nods, his gaze averted.

JUANITA

(her gaze and

manner bold)

Then I will tell you how you drink
it, Jake. Straight. No lime. No
salt. Straight.

JAKE

(head still lowered)

Yes, that's right.

JUANITA

I know. That is how a man drinks it.

QUINN (O.S.)

(in a quiet voice)

Good morning, Mister Pepper.

Juanita's expression turns bitterly scornful as her glance
and Jake's shift to the voice.

QUINN (O.S.)

Thanks for coming.

AT QUINN

walking slowly toward the fireplace.

QUINN

I've been greatly looking forward
to this game for quite some time.

A HIGH FULL SHOT OF THE LIVING ROOM

Juanita slaps her glass onto the bar and walks stiffly
from the room while the two men stand staring at each other
in silence. Set up between them, near the fireplace,
is the chessboard, a chess table and two facing chairs.
She turns into a hallway. We HEAR her receding footsteps,
then the SHUTTING of a DOOR. Quinn looks toward a window.

QUINN

I think it's going to snow.

He continues to stare out for a beat; then he takes single log after log from a stack of wood on the hearth and builds up the fire.

AT QUINN

QUINN

Too bad about Clem's little girl.
Damned shame. Incidentally, Clem's father was a dangerous psychotic. He grew up on a ranch just south of Rosewell and -- . Well, one night when Clem was a boy he came home and there was a light coming through the window onto the porch, and all the fingers of his father's left hand were lying there -- his father had cut them off with a hatchet.

(a beat)

You wouldn't think that a picture like that existed inside Clem's head.

Quinn turns to look at Jake, firelight reflecting eerily from the lenses of his glasses. There is a slight self-satisfied and knowing smile on his face -- and the unmistakable shine of madness in his eyes.

QUINN

At least he wasn't bored to death, Jake. You get my drift? He was one of the pieces on the board. Just a pawn.

HIGH DOWN SHOT THE ROOM

Now the talk moves at a rapid, clipped pace.

JAKE

Then it's all been a game.

QUINN

An exciting game, Jake. Or should I call you "Father" Jake?

JAKE

You researched me and then let me know it.

QUINN

Right.

JAKE

To get me in the game.

QUINN

Right.

JAKE

And what about the river committee?

QUINN

They were scum, Jake, despoilers of beauty.

JAKE

Why now?

QUINN

Well, we had to have a motive for you, Jake.

JAKE

For the game.

QUINN

For the game. Incidentally, the detection is just the first step. I've been generous with clues, after all, don't you think? No, what raises this contest to grandmaster level is that I provide the bodies and the clues and the motive, and you, the great master detective, have to prove it. That should while away the dullness of these wintry days and nights.

JAKE

That old couple -- the Emmons -- weren't on the committee.

QUINN

Right.

JAKE

Why did you kill them?

QUINN

I needed an "E".

AT JAKE

He begins to rise from his chair very slowly, his eyes

widened, the enormity of the horror registering on him and mixing with fury and revulsion.

JAKE
(a rasp)
Jesus! Jesus Christ!

AT QUINN

QUINN
I've played fair, Mister Pepper.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE PENASCO - DAY

Jake's car speeding, taking curves recklessly.

INT. JAKE'S CAR - FRONT MOVING SHOT - DAY

We are CLOSE on Jake. Frantic.

INT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Marylee is playing the piano, drunk and raucous and bawdy. We can see the front door open, Addie enter. She removes and hangs her jacket. She is down; she's just returned from the Andersen house. She enters the living room listlessly, slumps down onto a chair or sofa. Then she looks over at a small table and chair setup, sees mail on the table. She gets up, goes slowly to the table, sorts through the mail. From off, the SOUND of THUNDER ROLLING. Addie looks out a window, sees the sky darkening. She tosses down the stack of mail without opening anything. The hit the table with a smacking sound.

ADDIE
Jesus! Jesus Christ! What
a world!

She moves to moves to a sideboard where bottles of liquor stand.

ADDIE
(through gritted
teeth)
It is fucked!

With a sweep of her hand, she knocks a row of bottles off the table, sending them crashing to the floor. Only two of them survive, standing intact: a bottle of dark brown liqueur and a bottle of vodka.

ADDIE
(shouting)
Marylee, it is fucked! Fucked!

Marylees stops playing.

MARYLEE
Could you hum a little bit of
the beginning?

An URGENT KNOCKING at the front door.

ADDIE
(moving toward
Shit!

MARYLEE
Who the hell wrote that?

And resumes whatever she was playing and singing before. More KNOCKING, louder and more urgent.

ADDIE
I'm coming!

She throws open the door. Wind and freezing rain gust in. Jake is there.

ADDIE
Jake! Oh, Jake, come in!
Come in!

REVERSE ANGLE

Now Marylee is in the background. Jake is inside. Addie closes the door, embraces him powerfully.

ADDIE
Oh, Jake, I'm so frightened of
this world!

JAKE
I need to talk to you, Addie.

JAKE
Make love to me, Jake!

JAKE
I have to talk to you.

ADDIE
Make love to me now! There's
nothing else, Jake! No comfort!
Nothing -- !

JAKE
(interrupting)
Listen to me, Addie!

Addie abruptly breaks away, and her mood with her
She heads for the sideboard.

ADDIE
Oh, I'm listening. I'm all
wiggly-eared and listening.
Want a drink?

JAKE
No. Let's go someplace quiet.

ADDIE
In the kitchen, I guess. Just a
second.

She picks up the bottle of liqueur, a glass, comes back
and heads for the kitchen.

ADDIE
I need a little fortifying drink,
if you don't mind, and then I
guess we can talk all night, if you
like. Come on in.
(checking his face
as he follows)
You all right?

JAKE
Yes, I'm all right.

ADDIE
You look funny. Guess I shocked
you. Well, I'm shocking. I'm a
shocking person, Jake.

AT MARYLEE SINGING

INT. ADDIE'S KITCHEN

Addie sets the liqueur bottle on kitchen counter, twists
off the top, pours a drink. During this:

ADDIE
What's so important, Jake?

JAKE
Your life is in danger.

ADDIE
So is everyone's, starting
at birth. Christ, it isn't
even safe in the womb anymore.
You won't join me? It's ...
 she holds up bottle,
 squinting at label)
Praline liqueur??

Addie downs half a glass of the liqueur, makes a face.

ADDIE
Oh, my God, it's so sweet!

Addie is moving toward him as:

ADDIE
What's that look on your face?

JAKE
You can't stay here.

ADDIE
I want you to hold me. Can't you
see that I'm crazy about you? Please,
hold me in your arms.

Jake grips her shoulders:

JAKE
Addie, listen!

ADDIE
Just hold me.

JAKE
I have to go to Albuquerque, Addie.

ADDIE
Can't you hold me?

JAKE
I want you to come with me.
You can't be alone. Quinn's
the killer. He admitted it. He --

ADDIE
Oh!

Addie's wincing little gasp of surprise seems normal enough to Jake. But surprise or what he said is not the reason for her reaction.

JAKE
Yes, it's true and you're
next on his --

Addie emits a strange little choking sound, grasps her throat with a hand, her eyes bulging a little, the liqueur glass slipping from her grasp and crashing to the floor.

JAKE
Addie? Addie, what's wrong?
What's the --?

Now Addie has both hands around her throat. Her face is discoloring. Her mouth is open, moving, like a fish gasping for air. She looks frightened.

JAKE
Addie?

She jabs an index finger toward her throat. She can't breathe.

JAKE
Addie?

She is collapsing in his arms. Now the horrible realization dawns upon him as he sees -- over her shoulder -- the handcarved coffin sitting on the kitchen desk. The Vela poison!

JAKE
Oh, my God!

And again:

JAKE
Oh, my God!

And now it is a roar of agony.

JAKE
Oh, my Godddddddddd!

EXT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Wind-blown rain, THUNDER, roiling black clouds scudding low across the sky as the last of Jake's cry penetrates from the house and reaches for the heavens and an absent father.

INT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marylee bursts in, discovering Addie slumping in Jake's arms.

JAKE
(urgent shout)
She can't breathe! Get and
ambulance! An ambulance!

MARYLEE
(running out)
Oh, Jesus!

CLOSE AT ADDIE JAKE

She is shaking her head vigorously -- no! Her fingers fumble at and grasp the gold cross around her neck, pulling at it urgently.

JAKE
You want a priest?

She nods vigorously, her fingers digging deeply into his arms. He stares for a moment, numbed; then he lowers her to the floor.

JAKE
I am a priest, Addie!

He takes one of her hands in his.

JAKE
Please believe me. I'm a priest.
(at her incredulous
look)
I really am! Do you believe me,
Addie?
(she nods
swiftly, jerkily)
Are you sorry for all the sins of
your past life, Addie?

She nods again, squeezing his hand powerfully. He makes the sign of the cross over her, reciting the words of absolution:

JAKE
"Ego te absolvo, in nomine Patris,
et Filii et Spiritus sancti."

Now, weeping, he squeezes her mightily in both arms.

JAKE
Oh, Addie, I love you! I love
you! I love you!

EXT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The storm. The distant WAIL of an ambulance.

INT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jake still cradling Addie.

In burst a DOCTOR and TWO MEDICS. Jake looks up
at them as they halt at the sight.

JAKE
She's dead.

EXT. WIDE SHOT ADDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

THUNDER and LIGHTNING. RAIN.

FULL AT FRONT DOOR

as it is opened by Jake. He stands framed in the
doorway. We ZOOM CLOSE to his face. Quiet rage.
Deadly.

EXT. QUINN'S HOUSE - STORM - DAY

Jake's car pulls up. Jake gets out, walks to door.

INT. QUINN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - STORM

Alone in the room, he is reclined on a sofa, reading
a book. He turns a page, then looks toward the
door as he hears someone bursting in.

Jake, drenched, expressionless.

Jake holds there, arms at his sides, staring, the
door open to the storm behind him.

QUINN

Why, Jake! Come on in, Jake.
Close the door behind you,
would you? Jake?

Jake slowly and deliberately advances until he stands over Quinn, who remains calm, matter-of-fact.

QUINN

Oh. I understand. Well, that
was done before we talked today,
Jake. I'm awfully sorry. It was
just the final clue. I couldn't stop it.

Jake swiftly produces a .45 calibre revolver from a holster. Quinn chuckles.

QUINN

Oh, Jake. Jake, Jake. Good chess
means making moves that will make
your opponent's next move inevitable.
Yours is huffing and puffing a little,
then going to your headquarters,
sounding like a psycho -- which they
think you're all primed for, you know --
and then spending the rest of your life
in Penasco trying to gather the proof
of my guilt, which, of course,
would be impossible, Jake,
I assure you. Or maybe you'd
challenge me to a duel. I'm not sure
you'd even shoot at a man who was armed,
but if there's one thing I'm damned
sure of, Jake, it's that you're not
going to shoot to kill at a man
without a weapon who's lying down
reading

(he shows the book)

Blaise Pascal.

JAKE

"I feel, therefore I am."

Jake swiftly raises the gun and fires a bullet into Quinn's brain. Then another, and another and another as Quinn's body flops up grotesquely with each impact. And we:

FREEZE THE FRAME ON JAKE FIRING THE GUN

And as the END CREDITS ROLL, we HEAR an orchestral rendition of "BEGIN THE BEGUINE."

FADE OUT.